DATE DUE

SFPL AUG 21 '86

BOOK NO. B H146D

ACCESSION 303106

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

VITA SINE LITERIS MORS EST

FORM 3431 20M 1-41

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Careful usage of books is expected, and any injury or loss is to be paid for by the borrower. A charge of two cents will be made for each day, or fraction thereof, that this book is kept overtime.

SEE DATE WHEN DUE BELOW

This book may be renewed if not requested by other borrowers.

NOV 16 '43

Aug 24 '43

Sep 7 '43

Report change of address promptly.

F 3439—160M—11-40

Margaret
of the Mother of God

Life of
Mother Margaret Mary Hallahan

FOUNDRESS OF THE ENGLISH CONGREGATION OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

OF THE

THIRD ORDER OF ST. DOMINIC

BY

MOTHER FRANCIS RAPHAEL DRANE, O.P.

WITH A PREFACE BY ARCHBISHOP ULLATHORNE

and a FOREWORD to the Second Edition by

VERY REV. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.

"Tout mon plaisir, toute ma satisfaction, tous mes soins, seront de dire partout, Dieu seul, Dieu seul, Dieu seul!"

BOUDON.

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO,
LONDON :: NEW YORK :: TORONTO
1929

[*All rights of Translation reserved*]

Nihil Obstat: E. J. MAHONEY, D.D.
Censor Deputatus.

Imprimatur: EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vic. Gen.

Westmonasterii, die 23° *Septembris,* 1929.

B
H146d

303106

3 1223 00355 5654

Made in Great Britain.

FOREWORD

TO THE SECOND EDITION

THIS new edition of the life of Mother Margaret Hallahan is nothing more than a reprint of the first edition, with a minimum of alteration and with no additional matter introduced. The reason for this is not that no further materials for the understanding of her life have come to light but rather that the further materials (in the shape of letters, instructions, incidents, etc.) are so abundant as to warrant, in the judgment of her Congregation, the publication of them as a separate volume later on.

This minimum of alteration has been the insertion of such proper names as were not given in the first edition either because the persons referred to were still living or nearly related to others still living. Since then, however, so much time has elapsed that the names not only can be, but should be published, for the movement here described and all its aiders and abettors have passed into part of the history of the Catholic Church in England. All its details have therefore become of importance.

The language again of the book has been left as Mother Francis Raphael Drane wrote it (1869), without any attempt to modernise either the fashion of biography then prevailing or the style in which it was written. After all the book is a masterpiece of its kind.* We think that this is so because in the writing of it and by the experience of their friendship, Mother Margaret's character of noble simplicity worked on the character of Mother Francis

* Note the position accorded to Mother Margaret by William James in "The Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 376.

Raphael to deepen it, and also to add a more human emotion to the literary style.

Yet the book is of its age, in choice of phrase and incident: properly so, for it to obtain its passport to immortality. Only what is local and of its age can enter into the width and eternity of a classic: only 'occasional' writings never die.

The reader who is interested in the work of Mother Margaret will be pleased to learn that within the last months the various English Congregations of the Sisters of Penance of S. Dominic, five in all, have at their own request and by the authority of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, become amalgamated, under a single Mother General and with a single Noviciate. The title of this new Congregation is the title chosen by Mother Margaret for her Sisters, namely the Congregation of Saint Catherine of Siena: the Mother-house chosen is Mother Margaret's Mother-house of Stone. The work of this amalgamation has been achieved only through a spirit that Mother Margaret would have welcomed and surely did inspire, a spirit of unselfishness, wherein the five Mothers General concerned petitioned for their own uncrowning, and the five congregations for their absorption into a new body, sacrificing in some measure, the traditions they had hitherto received and followed.

Under the shelter of her House and inspired by the memories which her simple tomb awakened, the five Congregations voted, on April 9th, 1929, to lay aside their individualities in order to establish a new Congregation, larger, better equipped, and more effective for the common working of its purpose, the seeking of GOD ALONE.

FR. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.
Provincial.

HAWKESYARD PRIORY,
RUGELEY,
July, 1929.

PREFACE

AFTER reading the pages of Mother Margaret's Life, I bear witness, as well to its authenticity as a record of her acts and words, as to the success with which it portrays the character of this great servant of God. Of necessity, this Life is written chiefly from an external rather than from an internal point of view; it exhibits Mother Margaret more completely in her works than in her hidden life—that life which passed between her soul and God. For the secrets of her hidden life with God were known but to her spiritual guide, except that they were revealed in part to one of her spiritual children whom she was preparing to succeed her in the government of her Communities. And however expansive, however communicative of her spirit Mother Margaret at all times was, few souls have surpassed her in the fidelity with which she kept her secret gifts and her secret trials between herself and the Divine Giver of them. It was one of her most constant maxims, that to reveal the secret ways of God in the soul, unless where direction required it, is to expose whatever is most precious in them to be lost. Considering this life, then, as a record of all except the more exquisite interior gifts of this holy and valiant soul; and knowing, as I do, the unspeakable admiration and love for their spiritual mother which animate her children; I cannot but admire the fidelity to the original, the absence of idealisation, and

the careful impartiality with which her life has been written.

To make this great soul more thoroughly known would require the publication of all her spiritual letters, of which a precious store has been preserved. Written hastily, amidst constant interruptions, and sent off without revision, they are the spontaneous emanations of her own spirit, and go straight to the hearts for which they were intended. Nor, in a literary point of view, do they require more than here and there an occasional correction. For, though without literary training, Mother Margaret's style is excellent, full of character, and the complete reflection of her elevated mind. Springing from her own light and experience, whilst her letters give evidence of that reading of the best ascetic authors which she pursued all her life, they also reveal her deep and accurate knowledge of moral and mystic science, as well as of the science of souls, and of the ways of God in them: nor, though unconsciously, do they less exhibit the breadth, the purity, and the fervour of her own heart. Her clearness of sight in reading souls was wonderful. She seemed almost to have a special sense by which in many cases she felt their condition; and often, as she many times told me, did she pray that she might not see more clearly into other souls than her own. This keenness of insight was owing to her habitual looking at all things in God, to the absence of seeing what she looked at with reference to herself, to her intense love of souls, to her faith in what God operates in souls; above all, to the purity with which her mental eye looked to the interests of God alone in souls. At what may be called the critical period of her spiritual life, it cost her two years of hard labour in the mortification of sense, and of mental curiosity, before she acquired the constant habit of fixing her interior sight on God in recollection, and this habit was the secret of her spiritual strength.

Besides these spiritual letters, some notes were taken in the last years of her life of her short addresses to her Sisters in Chapter, as well as of some of her remarkable sayings in familiar conversation, and these are more complete expressions of her spirit than even her letters. Of these sayings, sufficient examples have been given in this Life to enable the reader to form some judgment of her wisdom in Divine things. She had the faculty of putting a great truth in a short sentence, with a force that made it as clear as if it had been expanded in a treatise, whilst no treatise could give it the same cogency. A collection of her pithy sayings would make an admirable manual of spiritual proverbs. Let me give a few more examples of these sayings, uttered as occasion called them forth :— " Penance," she said, " ought not to sadden or depress. If it does, it is a sign of something wrong in the soul ; for the function of penance is to unlock the soul and set it free : " " There are no penances that search the soul like those that God sends : " " When God sends you a trial, no one but God can relieve it. You must be directed, but only God can enable you to go through with it ; and the more you keep it between God and yourself, the better it will be for you : " " If you rid yourself of human respect, it will not only free your mind, but will improve your health by removing the strain upon you : " " There is no deep love of God without a childlike, reverential fear : " " Nothing makes a soul clear-sighted like humility : " " You can only love God so far as you are humble : " " So long as I keep my eye on God all is well, but if I lose sight of Him, I am troubled indeed : " " Contemplation does not consist in saying many prayers, but in setting your heart on God."

There are, in my possession, some thirty of Mother Margaret's letters of a yet more sacred character. Addressed to her director, they reveal the secrets of her interior, and though intermingled with many self-accusa-

tions, they reveal the sublime degree of detachment and divine love to which this holy soul had reached. Her severe austerities, which were even increased in her last and most suffering years, were altogether unknown to her Communities.

Mother Margaret had the gift of infusing her spirit into her disciples ; she could impart to them not merely of her light, but of her life and character. The amount and force of spiritual vitality in a soul is tested by this power of communicability to other souls. To any great degree this communicability is a rare gift. Minds illuminate one another far more easily than souls enkindle one another, and it is easier to transmit light than life. Rare as suns are those souls which seem to act on other souls like a sacramental power, shedding the rays of their own inward sense of God, and vital warmth of spirit into the souls that come within the sphere of their action. Here, then, we come to understand the greatness of this soul, that was so ardent, vigorous, expansive, and diffusive. Not that she diffused her *self*, but the enlightening, warming, and invigorating grace that was within her, whereby she opened souls to her influence as the sun opens the blossoms into flowers, and not only did other souls open themselves, but they bowed themselves to the force of her superior spirit.

The secret of her wisdom was in her resting the centre of her soul upon God as on its centre ; and, as she said, if she departed from that centre, she departed from her point of communion with God :—" *The Lord is my firmament, and my refuge, and my deliverer.*" Then, in the simple spirit of antique faith, her ear was ever open to the voice of the Church as to Christ Himself, her mind intent upon His light, her heart bowed down to the influence of the Holy Spirit, towards whom she ever bore a marked and special devotion. No doubt she had a large and powerful nature, as all who were acquainted with her

knew; but her Lord gave her also great graces from her childhood, and with them, the grace of knowing the gift of God, which was the source of unceasing and most humble gratitude. In this respect, Mother Margaret realized that definition of humility ascribed to St. Prosper, that it consists in confessing the grace of Christ. Her firm faith was so vivid in its character that it was almost like an intuition of the entire prospect of revealed truth. Let an error against faith be concealed under expressions however abstruse, and her sure instinct found it out. I have tried this experiment repeatedly. She might not be able to separate the heresy by analysis, but she saw, and felt, and suffered from its presence. Her perfect faith kept her as free from credulity as from mental extravagance. She mistrusted the imagination as she abhorred all sensual excitement, seeking ever to be guided by the pure light of truth. The plain way of the Church, and our Lord's counsels, were to her the path of life. She always inculcated the preference, even in devotions, of what comes through the Church to all that comes through private channels. She had no love of extraordinary ways, and was the unrelenting adversary of extraordinary pretensions. She had the gift of giving freedom to souls, as well as that of inspiring courage. Her strictness was reserved for occasions where there was danger of sin, or of losing the way of perfection. If her love of her children was beyond expression, her detachment was as strong as her love. And yet, when she was anxious upon an occasion lest something about her should come to their ears that might grieve them, she wrote to her director, as a ground for keeping it secret, that—"Thanks be to God, no Religious Superior was ever more blessed with the love of her children than she was." Spiritual common sense was the deep-laid basis of that intelligence which carried her through all trials and difficulties. She drew everything to God, and nothing to herself. And, when dying, she called

the other Superioresses to witness that she had never attached anyone to herself.

There were three things that, in the degree in which they possessed this great soul, were very singular, and that distinguished her from every holy soul that I have been acquainted with.

The first was the way in which her spirit clove to God so constantly, that to turn from God to herself for the purpose of self-introspection, became to her a source of great suffering. It was for many years that this habit continued but with little interruption; nor did either her interior sufferings or darknesses, of which she passed through so many, turn or stay her from thus clinging with her heart to God. Let me quote a passage with which she closes a manifestation of her entire life from a child. The reader will not fail to allow for that tone of humility which in God's holy servants is ever prone to exaggerate in the general confession of their faults. She says:—

"Our dear Lord has made all His creatures for an end, and me to do His work in His way. It is to act, and not to talk. The end may be that I may be a castaway, for I ever look upon myself as a sort of broom our dear Lord makes use of, to show that contemptible things can bring forth His will, and that, when done with, it may be cast, like all old brooms, into the fire. I think, to the best of my power, I have given you a relation of my whole life—I mean its sinful part—and I do hope you know me in part; but all this I consider to be outside my soul, not in it: for there I hope does God only dwell. But when I say this, my Father, I do not mean to say I am not a sinner, and a sinner and nothing else. But this sinner loves her God, and nothing with Him but Himself and all that concerns His glory. I must explain myself by a comparison. It is like a wife who loves her husband, and is ever attentive to him: no labour, no trouble wearies her; his every look and wish

is studied and attended to; yet with all this she is quick, impatient, and may be overbearing to her servants and to all around her in many ways. Yet it is not directly against her *one love*, but is the fruit of her bad, corrupt nature."

I need scarcely observe, that in this manifestation of her whole life she but proves unconsciously how innocent and pure that life had been. As to what she says of the broom and the fire, whilst she speaks as St. Paul spoke in his humility, her confidence in God and in God's love of her soul was amongst her firmest virtues. Once, and only once, her Superior for her trial accused her of an innocent indeed, but a too human attachment; and, solicitous as she was that not a shadow of any creature should stand between her soul and God, this was a sore trial to her spirit. For a whole month she searched about to find what cause there might be for this charge in vain, till she received a letter of explanation. To this she replied: "Had you so thought of me, I could not have withheld what I thought and felt for any creature whatever. I have had a painful month, thinking and examining what I could have said or done to give such an impression. I had two Masses said in honour of the holy angels, that this might be set right, which I hope it is. . . . I feel too vile and unworthy to guide those committed to me, but I can never acknowledge that one affection of my heart is given to any creature, only in God and for God. It is the only thing I can offer Him for my many, many crimes, that at least I have no other love."

Yet so far was this ardent lover of God from finding her close contemplation of Him, and her close union with Him, an obstacle to the loving her neighbour, that it only made her the more energetic in toiling without cessation for the service of the needy and the suffering, and for the sanctification of souls. She often sighed to be alone with God, and when she visited her dearest friend, who was a Prioress

of the contemplative children of St. Benedict, she felt the growth of that thirst to be alone with God; but for the very love of God in souls she resisted this attraction. Those who came in contact with her were naturally led to think that her whole heart was poured abroad in her charity for souls; they were little aware that whilst she laboured, wrote, or spoke from morning till night, the centre of her soul remained unmoved upon its Divine centre, and was going on its interior way of recollection in God and prayer.

Her physical sufferings, that were so frequent and protracted, and especially those excruciating pains which she endured in the head and spine, were owing, as all her medical advisers told her, to her uninterrupted labours of body, mind, and nerves, drawing so largely and unintermittingly upon her vital powers; and these were not rarely joined to interior pains of the spirit. And when we add to them those severe penances, which were not often or for any length of time relaxed, we may form some idea of that steadfast endurance which made her a victim of patience as well as of love. Amidst all she was never exhausted of the power of inspiring courage and consolation, or even of imparting joy.

The second thing that was most singular in this soul was intimately connected with the first. I speak of that suffering which it always cost Mother Margaret to turn from God to herself, and to look into herself by direct self-introspection. In this she especially resembled St. Catherine of Siena, whose maxim it was, that "you must know yourself and know God; but must know yourself, not in *yourself*, but in *God*, and God in you." It was only two years before her death that the passages in St. Catherine's works treating this point were brought to Mother Margaret's notice; but for the greater part of her life this rule had become for her a necessity, as many striking passages in her manifestation clearly show. Her

great knowledge of herself she obtained by reflecting on herself in God. But if ever she turned the eye of her mind directly upon herself, it seemed as if a dark cloud came over her soul, that on that cloud was written *Self*, and losing the direct sight of God's presence, without gaining any sight of herself, she became troubled and distressed. If a director required her in obedience to try at self-introspection, she strove indeed, but that *nubecula*, as I believe the mystics would call it, came over her soul: she grew very suffering; her imagination, which she habitually mistrusted and kept under, began to work; she grew sleepless; a heavy pressure was felt on her head, and that pressure increased until she could only compare it to "an iron hand thrust into her brain"; and only when she turned again from herself to the objective presence of God did she recover her freedom, her light, her peace, and the true knowledge of herself as well as of God.

The third point of which I spoke was so singular, and on reflection I find it would be so difficult, without writing something like a treatise on the subject, to make it intelligible to the reader, that I must satisfy myself here by saying, that it indicated in a remarkable degree her angelic purity.

Of Mother Margaret's constructive abilities, of her legislative wisdom, of her capacity for government, and of her skill in guiding souls to God, this book presents some record. She was a magnificent example of that spiritual maternity which labours to bring forth children to God; of that exalted motherhood which nurses the offspring of other Christian mothers into servants of God and saints.

Who can read the history of this orphan child, and not admire in it the way of God's goodness, who raises up the poor from the dust to sit with the princes of His people? Her Heavenly Father led her by the light of His presence through many tribulations, all of which

contributed to the discipline of her heart. The sense of God's presence was her guiding star from infancy. She is a lonely girl, not having the thoughts of other girls; and a lonely woman, not having the sentiments of other women. Writing a manifestation of her secular life, she says—"I never had any companions but books; these were enough for me." As she is entering into womanhood, the ways of the world and the thoughts embodied in its literature attract her attention and awaken her interest, but God preserves her from its corruption; and making a sacrifice for ever of her intellectual curiosity, she enters upon the path of the saints, studies their science, and puts it into practice. In a long course of domestic service, which subdues without extinguishing her spirit of fire, whilst it gains her much experience in many ways, notwithstanding the humbleness of her position, she never fails to become an influence. "I never sought to govern anyone," she writes in that manifestation of her life, "but all my life it has come to me, so that I have never known real subjection." Yet, whilst looked up to by all around her, this poor girl is exercising a most severe control on her senses, and, through protracted exercises, is subjugating her spirit to God's direction. For God Himself trains her with His grace and light, and through the discipline of suffering; and He sends her a severe but wise director to teach her the use of His inspirations. She longs to do something for God, and for many years this longing tries her patience, for she knows not what that something is to be, nor can anyone tell her. In that manifestation repeatedly quoted, she says—"When I went to Belgium, God in His mercy sent me a guide for twenty years, to whom I feel indebted for my salvation. It was hard work with nature to keep with him, but I did; and I bless God a thousand times that I did. I had all this time a desire to be a Religious, but he would never hear of my going into religion in Belgium. He used to

say very often in confession, he did not see his way with me. He thought God called me to do something for His glory, but he could not say what. This made me frequently laugh in my own mind, for I used to wonder what I could do, a poor, helpless, friendless girl, without health or means, but the wish to serve God with all my heart. He kept me eight years, trying me, before he let me enter the Third Order."

And now behold this lonely and poor woman, made ripe in spiritual wisdom and in human experience, returning a stranger and unknown to the land of her birth. Yet God has already prepared a way for her, and she begins a spiritual work, which slowly rises under her hands from humble beginnings into the highest character, and surrounds itself with numerous institutions of mercy and charity. Foundress of a Congregation of the ancient Dominican Order, she trained a hundred Religious women, founded five convents, built three churches, established a hospital for incurables, three orphanages, schools for all classes, including a number for the poor, and, what is more, left her own spirit in its full vigour to animate her children, whose work is only in its commencement. Moreover, under her inspiration and direction, a body of Constitutions and a Rule of discipline were drawn up from the old codes of Dominican law, which are being spread, by the authorities of the Order, both in Europe and America. Her character cannot be more happily portrayed than in the few words wherein Montalembert describes certain heroic religious women of the old Saxon days of our country. She had " the vigour of the man, the tenderness of the woman, and the simplicity and unpretending humility of the child."

I cannot close this preface without once more giving thanks to God, that, in His goodness, He deigned to make me an instrument to co-operate in the work of this great soul, and that I have had the privilege of her

friendship and prayers for six and twenty years. Of the character of that friendship I can only re-echo her own words, uttered on her deathbed :—" It has been always in God and for God."

✠ W. B. ULLATHORNE.

BIRMINGHAM, *24th February*, 1869.

CONTENTS

		Page
Foreword		v
Preface		vii
Chapter I.	1803–1826	1
Chapter II.	1826–1842	21
Chapter III.	1842–1845	49
Chapter IV.	1845	87
Chapter V.	1845–1847	119
Chapter VI.	1848–1850	154
Chapter VII.	1850–1852	183
Chapter VIII.	1852–1854	244
Chapter IX.		289
Chapter X.		326
Chapter XI.		365
Chapter XII.		391
Chapter XIII.	1855–1859	413
Chapter XIV.	1859–1867	445
Chapter XV.	1867, 1868	499
Addenda		540

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Portrait of Mother Margaret Mary Hallahan *Frontispiece* (*Photogravure*)

Facing page

Mother Margaret's statue of Our Lady; Mother Imelda Poole; Mother Francis Raphael Drane 161

St. Dominic's Priory, Stone: V. Dominic's Chapel in the grounds; Church; North view of Priory; South front - - - - - - - 273

Priory of O.L. of Angels, Stoke-on-Trent; St. Mary's Priory, St. Marychurch, Torquay; Convent of Holy Rosary, Kelvedon; Choir of Priory, Hawick, Scotland; Exterior of Priory, Hawick - - - - - - - - - - - 470

Life of Mother Margaret Hallahan

CHAPTER I

1803-1826

MARGARET HALLAHAN was born in London,[1] of Irish Catholic parents, on the 23rd of January, 1803. Her father, Edmund Hallahan, belonged to a family which occupied a respectable position in society, but owing to a long series of misfortunes he himself had sunk in life, and found himself at length obliged to maintain his family by humble labour. Although, owing to the early death of her parents, Margaret was able to recall but few particulars regarding her family, she distinctly recollected a visit paid them during her childhood by her father's brother, who gave her a sovereign, and whom she spoke of as a lawyer at the Temple. Even after her father had fallen into reduced circumstances he was sufficiently well off to be the owner of a row of cottages let out as lodgings; and his subsequent poverty was in part the result of his ignorance of any trade. During the latter part of his life he hired himself as porter to a wine-merchant, and the failure of his

[1] So at least it is supposed; but every effort to obtain her baptismal register has hitherto failed.

health was attributed to his having worked in this capacity beyond his strength. The maiden name of his wife was Catherine O'Connor; her family were all pious Catholics, and one of them, Father John O'Connor, was a Dominican, and lived to an advanced age in the convent at Cork. Margaret was their only child, and the idol of her father, of whose indulgent affection she always retained a lively remembrance. She inherited the warm religious instincts of her mother, and manifested them with a certain childish impetuosity, prostrating and putting her forehead to the ground in prayer, and indulging in other exterior demonstrations of piety, which sometimes drew from her mother the warning words, "Little saints make big sinners." Many Catholic practices used to be kept up in the family, such as the burning of a large candle on Christmas-Eve, which no one was allowed to snuff who did not bear the name of Mary. Margaret also remembered accompanying other pious Catholics in the visits which it was then customary among them to pay to Tyburn in memory of the martyrs who had suffered there since the Reformation. These pilgrimages were performed with great devotion, and generally on Sundays, but their object was kept carefully concealed from Protestant neighbours. The child appears to have been treated by her mother with some severity, which possibly appeared the greater from its contrast to the extreme tenderness shown her by her father. The memory of her domestic life was associated with many sorrows, for her father's troubles had imbittered his spirit, and the unhappiness she witnessed in her own home impressed her, when still a child, with a dread of matrimony which she never afterwards lost.

Her education began at the school established at Somers Town by the celebrated *emigré* priest, the Abbé Carron. Here she attended as a day-scholar, and one of her earliest recollections was the affection with which her father was accustomed every day to meet her on her return from

school, always bringing her a little cake, or some similar present. Few as are the anecdotes that have been preserved of her childhood, they are not a little characteristic. She was only eight years old when the Jubilee of King George III was celebrated, on which occasion her parents took her to St. James's Palace, which on that day was thrown open to the public. Most of the visitors who thronged the royal apartments satisfied their loyalty and their curiosity in a truly English manner, by sitting in the king's chair, but when Margaret was invited to do the same, she stoutly refused, though her mother persisted, and afterwards punished her for her refusal, which arose, as she afterwards explained, from a certain feeling that it was only a sham sort of honour, which she could not endure. Moreover, the grandeur of the state apartments did not greatly affect her; they fell far short of what her lively imagination had pictured as worthy of a king's palace, for at eight years old the child of poverty had already within her ideas of lofty magnificence which were not easily satisfied. Her passionate temper was at that age under little restraint, and on the evening of the same popular holiday, she described herself as "dancing about in a passion, and pulling her own hair," because her parents refused to take her out to see the illuminations.

Her father's death took place in the year following this little incident. He died of consumption, and in the last stage of his malady Margaret was sent to some relations living at a farm at Kilburn to remove her from the danger of infection. She was therefore absent from home at the time of his death, of which, however, she was in some way conscious before she received the actual intelligence. Her mother being now left in yet more embarrassing circumstances, the Reverend Mr. Hunt, a charitable priest of Moorfields, procured the admission of the child into the Orphanage attached to the Somers Town establishment, where she remained until her mother's death. The whole

period of her school-life did not exceed three years, and closed when she was but nine years of age. She always spoke in praise of the order and discipline of the Somers Town school which was conducted at that time by French emigrant ladies of rank. Many of the instructions were given in French, and Margaret, with the rest of the children, learnt to say her Catechism and sing hymns and *Cantiques* in French, a circumstance which afterwards facilitated her acquisition of that language. Several English ladies likewise assisted in the school, among whom was Miss Trelawney, daughter to a Cornish baronet, who, herself becoming a convert to the Catholic religion under remarkable circumstances at the age of seven years, was afterwards the means of bringing her father and several members of her family to embrace the faith. At this time Miss Trelawney resided next door to the Somers Town establishment, together with her mother, who was still a Protestant, and in the habit of frequently receiving visits from the celebrated preacher Rowland Hill. On these occasions little Margaret was often sent for from the school to read aloud to the Protestant divine, with whom she appears to have been a favourite. This circumstance also finds its place in the reminiscences of one, at that time a Protestant, and a total stranger to Margaret and her family, but destined at a later period to become a member of her community. Being then a child, she happened to be one day in the company of Rowland Hill, who, hearing a little companion of hers addressed as "Margaret," exclaimed, "What! are *you* called Margaret? and you are not unlike my little Margaret, and are about the same age." Then turning to the lady of the house, he told her how *his* little Margaret was a Roman Catholic orphan, who had been occasionally sent for to read to him whilst at dinner, to cure him, as he said, of the bad habit of eating too fast with a book in his hand, when he was first left a desolate widower. His words left a permanent impression

on the mind of the hearer, who gathered from his description that the appearance of the child thus named had something remarkable about it, and pictured her as tall and mature for her age, with modest manners, and already noted for her skill as a reader.

This last-named gift Margaret retained through life, but in other respects her school-training was very imperfect. She was never able to master the mechanical art of cipher-ing, though she had a method of her own for calculating, by which she was generally able to detect any error in the reckoning of others. But she acquired a taste for reading, which at a later period she gratified by devouring every book that came in her way. Her lively and impulsive nature did not very readily submit to the strict discipline enforced in the Somers Town Orphanage, and she specially felt the law of silence, which was exceedingly rigorous. Her frequent infractions of this rule sometimes got her into trouble. On one such occasion she was kneeling at the outer gate by way of penance, when the Abbé Carron himself entered, and was about to introduce some visitors. Perceiving the confusion of the little delinquent, he good-naturedly signed for her to rise and retire unobserved, then patting her kindly on the head he said in a deprecating tone to her mistress, " You will see, she will be good by and by." One obstacle to Margaret's progress during the short period of her school-life was the constant recurrence of inflammation of the eyes, from which she suffered during her childhood, and for many years afterwards. In consesequence of this she never learnt to sew well, though no one had a quicker eye than she had to detect the slightest defect in needlework, whether plain or ornamental. If her progress in secular learning was thus limited during her three years of school-training, she nevertheless profited much by the solid religious instruction which she received at Somers Town. It appears probable, moreover, that some of the habits and maxims of the venerable Abbé Carron

may have been unconsciously imbibed by a soul so keenly alive as hers was to all generous instincts. It is impossible to read his life without being struck by the similarity which her spirit in some respects bore to his. This holy priest, who came to England a penniless exile in 1796, contrived in the course of a few years, by his unwearied exertions, to found and support two hospitals, an ecclesiastical seminary, two day-schools, an orphanage, and a providence. Besides this, he spent £4,000 in the erection of a church; and the sums which passed through his hands in the administration of all these charities are reckoned as amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds. Yet it may literally be said that his principal resources were his unbounded faith and confidence in God. When any unusual difficulties weighed on him his plan was "to draw down dew from heaven," as he expressed it, by giving in alms what little money he had remaining. And when the never-failing help of providence enabled him to commence some fresh work of charity, he was accustomed to pour forth his gratitude by binding himself to undertake something more for God. In this school of supernatural faith and charity, Margaret's susceptible nature received its first religious impressions, among which must be noted that lively sense of the Divine presence which never afterwards forsook her. She was accustomed to trace this feeling to the effect produced on her soul by a representation of the ever-watchful Eye of God, which was painted in a triangle, after the French fashion, over the high altar in the church. Margaret's childish imagination readily endowed the painting with life; she believed it to be the veritable Eye of God, and observed, with a sensation of awe, that in whatever direction she moved it appeared to follow her.

Scarcely six months after her father's death her mother followed him to the grave, a victim to the same fatal malady. She died in St. George's Hospital, and thus at the age of nine years Margaret was left in the desolation of

complete orphanhood. "My mother's death," she writes in one of her letters, "took place three days before Christmas; it was a sorrowful Christmas to me." At the same time a change in the arrangements of the Somers Town Orphanage led to the dismissal of as many of the children as were supposed to have any independent means of support, and among these Margaret was, from some cause, included, although, in point of fact, destitute alike of friends and resources. The good priest who had before interested himself in her favour, however, again came to her aid, and placed her in service, where she appears to have remained for two years. At the end of that time she was, through the kindness of Mr. Hunt, received into the family of Madame Caulier, wife to a French emigrant of good birth, who, like many others in like circumstances, had been compelled to embark in trade, and had opened a lace warehouse in Cheapside. Her niece, who resided with her, having been recently confined, Margaret, then eleven years old, was engaged for the purpose of taking charge of the infant; but soon after coming to the house she was seized with fever, and, in her attacks of delirium, was often heard singing the litanies and *cantiques* which she had learned at Somers Town.

Madame Caulier continued to retain her in her family for several years, and became warmly attached to her. She failed not to appreciate the rare qualities which were early discernible in her *protégée;* but at the same time she treated her with excessive harshness. The faults which drew forth her corrections were generally untidiness or careless breakages; but the severity with which they were visited increased the evil, for Margaret became so nervous that if she met her mistress when she was carrying anything fragile in her hands, she was almost sure to let it drop from very fear. She never entirely lost the effects of this treatment, so that to the last there mingled with her high and independent spirit, a certain character of timidity. She

has frequently said that as a girl she never entered the presence of her mistress without trembling, and expecting a sharp correction. She used to wonder how a person otherwise so charitable and devout could show so much severity to a child, and deeply sensible of her desolate position, she would say to herself, in the midst of her troubles, " When I take in little orphan children I will do all I can to make them happy; they shall never have to regret their parents as I do mine."

This conduct on the part of Madame Caulier was far from being the result of any real want of affection. She had the intention of adopting Margaret as her child, and in a manuscript memoir which she dictated at a later period, she attests the admiration and esteem with which the character of the young girl secretly inspired her. " I know well enough," she writes, " that she was far fitter to be a queen than a servant." And she adds, that when in doubt on any point she always contrived to get her advice, and generally followed it. The harshness and irritability which she manifested towards her may have been in part the result of the severe mental anxiety which she endured for two years, during which time her husband was detained a prisoner in France, and she received no tidings of his fate, and it was partly a mistaken strictness of discipline. For the rest she spared no pains in the training she bestowed on her *protégée*. She carefully instructed her in all household matters, and nursed her tenderly in her frequent sicknesses; and it was from her that Margaret acquired the skill she so often afterwards displayed in discharging the same charitable office towards others. Considering her rather in the light of a child than a servant, she would not suffer any of the young people in the warehouse to address her as " Peggy," and evinced her fondness by the care she took in having her well dressed. But whilst thus gratifying her own tenderness, she was careful to screen the object of it from any temptation to

vanity, by repeatedly telling her she was " an ugly little thing." Margaret did her best to believe it, but was wont to admit that she did not always feel able to agree with the judgment of her mistress on this point. She constantly expressed her sense of the advantage which Madame Caulier's early training had been to her ; yet the fear in which she lived rendered her life a wearisome one ; and when a year before her death she happened to pass through the streets near Cheapside, she burst into tears at the recollection of her early sufferings in that neighbourhood.

Some of the anecdotes related in the memoir spoken of above are too characteristic to be omitted. Margaret was one day sitting in the kitchen with a servant girl older than herself, who sometimes undertook to give her religious instruction. On this occasion their conversation was on the duty of making restitution. " You know," said her companion, " that if you were to see another steal, and the person who committed the theft did not make restitution, you would be bound in that case to make restitution yourself." For some days after this, Margaret was observed to be unusually thoughtful. At length one day Madame Caulier called her, and giving her a quantity of old newspapers which were lying about the house, told her she might take them and sell them. Margaret took the newspapers, saying to the servant, " Now I will brave Madame Caulier's anger : I will go and make restitution." Accordingly, having sold the papers, she bought with the money some tea and sugar and a bottle of rum. With these things in her hand she went to the house where she had formerly been in service, and going down on her knees before the mistress, she said, " If you please, ma'am, I am come to make restitution." " How, Margaret ? " was the reply, " I am sure you never did anything that was wrong ; what does all this mean ? " But Margaret only repeated that she came to make restitution. At last, being pressed to explain herself, she acknowledged that she had once

seen a fellow-servant take these articles and give them away, and that having learned her duty in such a case, she thought herself bound to make restitution. On another occasion several things had been missed in the house, and suspicion fell on one of the servants. Margaret was convinced of the girl's innocence, and being much distressed to see her suffering under the unjust charge, she resolved if possible to clear up the mystery. One day her voice was heard vehemently calling out for help ; everyone ran to the spot, and found her struggling with a man whom she firmly held in her grasp, exclaiming, as they entered, " Here is the thief ; Jane is innocent ! " It then appeared that for several days she had set herself to watch for the thief, concealing herself for the purpose under a bed, and as soon as he appeared, she sprang out and secured him.

Another incident related by her mistress reveals the germ of that tender compassion which she always cherished for those who had fallen into distress from a better position, and who were solitary and friendless in the world. A young relative of Madame Caulier's had been staying in the house, and whilst there became seriously ill. Madame Caulier, who was in the habit of talking over all her affairs with Margaret, mentioned her intention of sending this young person home, but Margaret entreated her not to do so. " When people are left to servants, as she would be," she said, " they often suffer much from neglect," and she concluded by begging that the young lady might remain in their house, promising to take the entire charge of her, and to attend on her day and night.

These generous qualities of heart were mingled with the impulses of a strong and passionate nature, and it was thought necessary, on account of certain childish faults, to defer her first communion, which she made at length on the Feast of the Assumption, but in what year is not known. She felt the delay poignantly, and the great day of her Communion left a deep impression on her soul. She

described herself as being at this time lively and impetuous, and unable to resist the impulse of "saying everything out." She was naturally cheerful and merry, much fonder of reading than of needlework, somewhat untidy, a fault that was afterwards thoroughly corrected; and of a passionate temper, but with such warm instincts of liberality, that, to use her own expression, she was often a thief for the poor. She used to give away whole loaves to the charwoman, and in spite of Madame Caulier's severity with her in other respects, she never made this a subject of blame, for she was herself most charitable to the distressed.

As time went on, the discomforts of her situation became so unendurable, that, when not more than twelve years old, she resolved to escape from them by running away, and seeking another service. She put her plan into execution, and in her simplicity and ignorance of the world, set about to find a situation, knocking by turns at all the doors in one of the streets of London, and asking if anyone within were in want of a little maid. In this way she came at last to a hotel, when the mistress, perceiving her forlorn condition, kindly took her in, and kept her to assist in her own nursery, not allowing her to serve the guests. She did not remain here long, for Madame Caulier, alarmed at her disappearance, had her publicly cried, and on discovering her retreat, took her home again, and for a time treated her with greater forbearance. When about thirteen she again entered service, and this time in a Protestant family, where for two years she was unable to hear Mass, and had much to suffer from her fellow-servants, especially from one person who was a professed infidel. It was possibly the same person who once ventured to speak disrespectfully of the Blessed Virgin in Margaret's presence. This was touching her in her tenderest point, and having no words ready at the moment with which to reply, she used a weightier argument, and seizing a large plate, broke it over his head. She never concealed her religion through

human respect, and was remembered in the family by the title of "the little maid that would not eat meat on Fridays." On leaving this situation she returned for a time to Madame Caulier, whose real kindness is sufficiently proved by the fact, that she always allowed Margaret to consider her house as her home. But before long she again entered service in a family where a painful trial awaited her. The master of the house so far forgot himself as to offer an insult to the poor servant-girl who should have claimed his protection. Margaret's modesty was, however, defended by her own firmness and courage. Seizing a knife she threatened to kill the intruder if he did not at once leave her presence, and the determination of her manner effectually compelled him to obey. After this she at once returned to Madame Caulier, and did not again leave her protection till her twentieth year.

During these years she had no opportunity of carrying on her education, though she took every means of gratifying her taste for reading. She read Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott; an old English translation of Father Caussin's work, entitled "The Holy Court," was one of her favourite books; she also read the English Scriptures, delighting greatly, when still a child, in the magnificent imagery of the Apocalypse. In fact, to use her own expression, she read whatever came in her way. She always represented herself as having relaxed at this time from her habits of early piety, and was accustomed to speak of this season of spiritual declension, and particularly of her habits of indiscriminate reading, in terms of bitter, and probably exaggerated self-reproach. It was during the latter portion of her residence with Madame Caulier that the seeds were laid of that painful affection of the spine from which she continued to suffer at intervals throughout the remainder of her life. It was caused, in the first instance, by an imprudent feat of strength. Possessed of extraordinary muscular power, she was

rather proud of hearing herself called "as strong as Samson"; and when about seventeen, seeing some men hesitate to lift a great iron stove, she thought to put them to shame, and carried it unassisted to the top of the house. But this achievement cost her dear; her back was severely strained, and two years later the injury was further increased by an accidental fall. In the illness that ensued she was attended by Sir Astley Cooper and another eminent surgeon, both of whom declared she would be fit for nothing but to lie on a sofa for the rest of her life. They also considered it likely that the brain would become affected in consequence of the confirmed spinal disease which had declared itself. She recovered from this first attack, but from that time became subject to the formation of lumbar abscesses, which caused excruciating agony, and rendered all bodily exertion painful. In later years even the ordinary effort of walking or standing was often beyond her strength; and it may truly be said that in the immense labours she imposed on herself her body was mainly supported by the indomitable power of her will.

When about twenty years of age, Madame Caulier recommended her to the service of Dr. Morgan, who had formerly filled the post of physician to King George III. He was an invalid, and Margaret, who possessed remarkable skill in the management of the sick-room, was engaged to attend on him in his declining years. She may be said to have found in his house a third school of charity. He was a true friend to the poor, never allowing any food to be given to them which was not fit to be brought to his own table, and saying, that unwholesome food was more likely to injure them than others who lived less poorly. Margaret stored up his instructions on this head, and acted on them in after years when she began her first orphanage. There were some who at that time advised her to buy meat for her orphans at a low price, but she constantly replied that such low-priced meat could not be fit for food, and that

she was firmly determined to give the children nothing which she would not give to her own community, quoting Dr. Morgan's words as her authority. She often related with pleasure how, on a keen frosty night during his last illness, he heard the watchman going his rounds, and asked, with compassionate solicitude, if the poor man had a great-coat. Margaret was sent down to call him in and investigate the point, and the watchman being shown up-stairs into the sick-room, Dr. Morgan gave him a sovereign towards the coat, and desired him to knock at all the doors on his beat and ask for additional subscriptions, and in due time the great-coat was purchased. Her affectionate attendance became so necessary to the invalid that he could not bear her to leave his bedside. For six weeks, she never took off her clothes, and seeing her look tired, he used to say, " Don't weary of me, Peggy ; it will not be for long." During this illness, it one day happened that Margaret was in the room adjoining that in which Dr. Morgan lay, when she distinctly saw him come out of his bedroom, dressed as he had formerly been when going out to visit his patients. He appeared to pass through the room and go out at the door. Margaret, much alarmed, hastened to the sick-bed, and there found her patient lying as she had left him. At last, very shortly before his death, Margaret was attacked with one of her terrible abscesses, and was no longer able to attend him. But even then the old man could not part from her, and insisted on a sofa being placed for her near his bed, that he might put out his hand, and be assured that she was there. She was still suffering from this attack when he breathed his last, and being removed to the top of the house, she was forgotten in the bustle and confusion of the necessary preparations, and was left for four-and-twenty hours without any assistance. On his death-bed Dr. Morgan recommended his faithful attendant to the care of his son and daughter, and charged them never to desert her. He also left her in his will a legacy

of £50. After his death she continued to reside first with his son, and afterwards with Mrs. Thompson, his married daughter. Under this lady's roof Margaret remained for twenty years, of which five were spent partly in London and partly at Margate, and the remaining fifteen in Belgium. She was intrusted with the care of the children of the family, but she soon won so much of the love and confidence of her mistress as to be regarded by her far more as a friend than as a servant. In the little memoir which Mrs. Thompson drew up before her death, she thus speaks of Margaret as she remembers her in the early days of their acquaintance: "When she first came to my father from Madame Caulier, she was very lively, and delighted in playing with the children. She had great personal as well as moral courage, a very independent spirit and noble mind, and was by nature more disposed to command than to obey." Towards the children of the family her heart expanded with the warmest natural affection she ever experienced. This affection never cooled or diminished, and she used to express the maternal love she felt for them by declaring that they were a part of herself. A year after she came to the family she nursed the eldest boy, Alcedo Thompson, through his last illness, and prepared him for his First Communion, which he made on his death-bed. Indeed, as her mistress observes in the little memoir quoted above, she possessed a singular power of instilling piety into the children under her care. She used to describe the intense suffering she went through when she had to take the youngest boy to school at Stonyhurst. This revealed to her the strength of her attachment to the child whom she had brought up from infancy. She reproached herself with it as an infidelity towards God, and inwardly resolved never again to set her affections on any creature.

Mrs. Thompson's husband was at this time absent in the West Indies, and during the two years that elapsed before his return, Margaret became her chief comfort and support.

In her devotion to the interests of the family she altogether forgot her own ; indeed, the disinterestedness of her character inspired her at all times with a kind of repugnance to receive payment for her services. How far this feeling was carried may be judged by one anecdote. Soon after Dr. Morgan's death, Margaret being then in his son's house, requested, with some hesitation, that she might be given a trifling sum of money for her necessary expenses. As it was known that Dr. Morgan's legacy had shortly before been paid to her, some surprise was expressed at her being so soon in want of money, and she was pressed to explain what she had done with it. At first she was unwilling to say, but at length admitted that she had expended the whole sum in Masses for the soul of her deceased benefactor. She used to relate that once when a gentleman offered her some money, she was so indignant at his supposing that her services had been rendered with a view to remuneration, that she threw the money after him into the street. Another gentleman having been on a visit to the house, gave her, on leaving, a small sum as a present. Margaret was unaware of this common custom and fearing lest the giver might have had some bad motive in making this offering, she ran after him with the intention of returning it. He had already quitted the house and got into his carriage, but she contrived by running to keep the carriage in sight till it stopped at his door, and not being in time to put the money into his hand, she laid it down on the door-step and returned home.

At Margate, she performed another extraordinary feat of muscular strength. She assisted at the death-bed of a man, who was a near relative of the Catholic priest. When he died, finding the poor widow was too timid to touch the corpse, she lifted it alone, and carried it without help to the room where it was to be laid out for burial.

Her first attraction to a more interior and strictly religious life began during her residence at Margate. The

person who at that time lived with the family as nurse was Mrs. Collishaw, an excellent and pious Catholic of gentle birth, who, having married beneath her own rank, had been cast off by her relations, and reduced to enter service. Margaret often spoke of the strong impression made on her soul by seeing this good friend weeping over her sins. It was by her advice that she sacrificed her passion for secular reading. "I never learnt to know God," she would say, "till I gave up my taste for reading; often I prayed that I might forget everything I had ever learnt, and know but Him alone, and I think He has heard my prayers." So great was the veneration that she felt for her friend, that afterwards at Coventry, whenever she received a letter from her, she used to kiss it and lay it on her head before opening it. Her religious sentiments were further deepened by a visit which she paid at this time to the Convent at Winchester, whither she accompanied one of the daughters of the family whom she was taking to school. It was in the chapel of this convent that she first became conscious of a vocation to the religious life, and from that time she seems to have adopted a method of life, and even a style of dress, indicating that in heart, at least, she had renounced the world. One of her oldest friends, Mrs. Amherst, thus describes her manner and appearance at this period: "I was but five or six years old when dear Mother Margaret used to come to our house with the Thompsons; and all that I can remember is, that we used to hail her appearance in the nursery with delight. The servants in the house felt the greatest respect for her; and my brother Francis says, that he well remembers one of them saying that she was fitter far to be in a nunnery than a nursery; and how, as a boy, he could not understand why she always dressed in black, and wore such a strange-looking cap. We were also much shocked at their calling her *Peggy*, for our nurse used to tell us that nicknames were bad words."

The black dress and strange-looking cap had not been adopted without a motive. Margaret, in her youth, possessed unusual personal attractions, of which, in spite of good Madame Caulier's precautions, she could hardly remain altogether unconscious. Even in her later years she retained traces of that noble beauty and that extraordinary dignity of manner which always left the impression that she was one of nature's queens. These personal gifts often drew on her a kind of admiration exceedingly repugnant to her, and to which she manifested her dislike with characteristic impetuosity. When one visitor at the house thought fit to address her some foolish compliment, she rejected his advances with so sound a box on the ear that he retreated, and complained to the mistress of the house that " Peggy had a heavy hand, and had used it in return for his civilities." The circumstance of another person having sought her in marriage determined her on putting an impassable barrier between herself and the world by taking a vow of chastity. She made it when about twenty-two, " kneeling on a kitchen-chair " ; and it was probably after this event that she adopted a style of dress intended as the outward token of her having renounced all prospects of worldly settlement.

Destined as she was to witness, and in her measure to take part in, the great religious revival which has changed the whole external aspect of the Catholic Church in England, she knew something of the extreme depression under which Catholics were at that time labouring. She often described with deep emotion the state of things which she remembered at Margate, and dwelt, not merely on the poor chapel and slender congregation, but on the suspicion and ill-will with which " the Roman Catholics " were regarded by their neighbours. She would relate how the boys were hooted at, and pelted with stones, when they went in the morning to serve at Mass, and how they were pointed at with derision as belonging to that unpopular

body whose proposed emancipation was just then exciting so much angry controversy. The questions involved in this controversy were often mooted in Margaret's presence, and left some lasting impressions on her mind. She conceived a certain uneasiness lest anything of the independence of the Church should be sacrificed in exchange for political advantages, and shared in the distrust with which many pious Catholics regarded the contemplated measure of relief. The Protestant state was always so ungodly a thing in her eyes, that she looked on the representation of Catholics in Parliament with the same dissatisfaction which she afterwards entertained at their acceptance of Parliamentary grants. Not, indeed, that she ever reasoned much on such subjects, but it is probable that her very strong instincts derived something of their intensity from the recollections of this period of her life. She had had personal experience of the national Anti-Catholic prejudice and to the last she remained persuaded that whatever fair words or measures of toleration might be won from Protestant Governments, they could never be safely trusted by Catholics as friends. "They may say what they choose, but they would like to hang us all," she wrote at a later period; "no Protestant Government can ever mean any good to the Catholic Church. The world never had, and never will have, the interests of God at heart; so all that it does with this colour we must avoid and suspect."

One of her peculiar characteristics was a great dislike of strangers and strange places. When, therefore, on Mr. Thompson's return to England, it was first proposed that the family should remove to Belgium, and Margaret was pressed to accompany them, she was in great trouble. She thought she should never get reconciled to such a change, and nothing but her affection for the children at last overcame her reluctance to leave England. Yet this step was one of momentous importance to her, and was destined, in the Providence of God, to bring her in contact with many

spiritual influences to which, humanly speaking, she would otherwise have remained a stranger. The removal to Bruges took place in the year 1826, when Margaret, then in the twenty-fourth year of her age, found herself for the first time in the atmosphere of a Catholic country.

CHAPTER II

1826-1842

IT is much to be regretted that more precise records have not been preserved of the period of Mother Margaret's residence in Belgium. It was in many respects the most critical portion of her life, during which she underwent a long and laborious preparation for the work to which she was afterwards called. Nothing would have been more interesting to her children than to have traced every step of that interior formation which was carried on in a life outwardly one of humble labour. But the materials that would have enabled them to do this are wanting: the confessor to whose prudent guidance she owed so much, and who is understood to have preserved written memoirs of his intercourse with her, preceded her to the grave by only four months, and every effort to recover these precious papers has hitherto proved ineffectual. And though many eye-witnesses of her life of charity and mortification survived her, that life was nevertheless in many respects a hidden one; the secrets of her soul were reserved for God, and no correspondence belonging to this time exists which would have set before us the genuine portraiture of her soul.

The scenes in the midst of which she found herself at Bruges were a new life to her. Keenly susceptible to all that was beautiful or magnificent, her soul awoke to a new sense in the churches of Belgium, where, for the first time,

she beheld the solemn offices of the Church performed with becoming splendour. New as it was, however, she was so thoroughly endowed with the capacity of appreciating the church ritual, that all in which she now took part, whilst it excited within her a kind of rapture, appealed to instincts of which she had been conscious from childhood. "The first time I heard a military Mass at Notre-Dame," she said, "I thought I should have gone crazy." The house in which the family resided was not far from Notre-Dame, and on the first great feast of Our Lady that was celebrated after their arrival, which happened to be that of the Assumption, she witnessed one of those exhibitions of popular devotion to which English eyes were then totally unaccustomed. When she saw the entire population taking part in the gorgeous procession, she felt like the Queen of Saba in presence of the magnificence of Solomon; "there was no more spirit in her." "I felt," she said, "that I must go to bed and die." Nor was she singular in her emotion: many English Catholics at that time resorted to Bruges, and on first witnessing the solemnities of the Church, celebrated with all the adjuncts of religious art and popular devotion, were often affected to tears. "English Catholics always cried," she said, "when they first entered the churches at Bruges."

There were at that time but two confessors in Bruges who received confessions in English, of whom one was M. Versavel, under-pastor of the Church of St. Walburga, and afterwards confessor to the great Beguinhof, a man of remarkable piety and spiritual discernment, but who bore the reputation of being exceedingly severe in his method of direction. Margaret placed herself in his hands almost immediately on her arrival at Bruges and remained his penitent for more than fifteen years. She soon found that the character of severity had not been attributed to him unjustly. Few of those who applied to him had courage to persevere long under his direction, and though in 1830

he became officially confessor to the Beguinhof, only one or two of its inmates were in reality his penitents. But in spite of the rigorous discipline to which he subjected her, Margaret was never induced to seek for gentler guidance. If she brought him the same fault twice over he sharply reproved her, and once kept her eight weeks from Communion. " It was a good thing for me," she said, in relating the circumstance, " and broke many bad habits." She always spoke with gratitude of what he had done for her soul. " I owe everything to him," she said, on receiving the intelligence of his death, as she lay on her own deathbed ; " I was just on the turn when I fell into his hands, wavering whether I should give myself to God or the world. I don't know what would have become of me but for him."

The immediate effect of his direction was to re-awaken in her soul that attraction to the religious life of which she had already been partially conscious, and which now made itself so strongly felt as to determine her on making trial of her vocation as a lay-sister in the English Convent of Augustinians at Bruges. In compliance with her urgent request, Mrs. Thompson obtained for her the first vacancy, but the result was a disappointment. She had scarcely entered ere she felt an irresistible conviction that it was not the will of God that she should remain, and she described herself as looking wistfully at the high walls of the enclosure, and longing to be outside again. Her imagination had depicted the religious life as one of uninterrupted prayer, nor was she at all prepared for the large amount of active labour which falls to the share of a lay-sister. She therefore acquainted the community with her wish to leave, declaring that " she would not remain if they were to make her Reverend Mother " ; and within a week she was once more installed in her former position in Mrs. Thompson's family. We must add that she always retained a most affectionate and respectful feeling for the community,

which was fully returned on their part, and through the remainder of her life they always ranked among her kindest friends and benefactors.

The failure of this first trial of her religious vocation was far from diminishing that ardour in the service of God which had moved her to make the experiment. The manner of life which she now embraced recalls some of those pages in the life of St. Catherine of Siena, which depict that holy virgin discharging the humblest domestic duties, whilst, at the same time, she was constantly seeking for fresh objects on whom to pour forth the treasures of her charity. Unfortunate commercial speculations having straitened the circumstances of the family, and obliged them to reduce their establishment, Margaret's position became every day one of greater labour and responsibility. For many years she discharged the entire domestic service, and by her energy and devotedness sustained the spirits of all around her. For herself, she was supported by higher motives than even her generous affections. She saw in the state of servitude a hidden grace which would have led her to embrace it even if not called to it by providential circumstances. "The state of servitude," she once said, "is a very holy state. It is so hidden and ignored, so full of self-sacrifice that is never considered. God has appointed it otherwise, or else I should have chosen it in preference to any other state." These words reveal to us something of the spirit in which she discharged her daily duties, and the religious light in which she regarded them; while we gather from a passage in one of her letters, that neither their number nor their laborious character were suffered to distract her from prayer. "I was more recollected," she writes, "and made more aspirative prayer in the kitchen than anywhere else. I think Our Lady taught me to cook, for I always invoked her and my angel guardian when I was cooking the dinner." Besides her unassisted discharge of all the household offices, she

nursed more than one member of the family through dangerous sickness: the youngest boy, who died in infancy, was tended by her to the last, and baptized by her hands; and by her close attendance on his mother during a tedious rheumatic fever, her own health became seriously affected. In a moment of urgency she undertook the journey to England to settle some pressing affairs of the family, crossing over to Margate one day and returning the next. During the Revolution of 1830, she was left alone at Bruges, in charge of the children, whose parents were absent in England, and underwent much anxiety and suspense during that alarming crisis. She used to say that her hair stood erect with terror at that time. One evening after leaving St. Walburga's Church after Benediction, she was about to turn down a particular street on her way home, when a passer-by warned her that it would not be safe. She had hardly retraced her steps before cannon were fired up the street, and a woman was killed. The house she then occupied was on St. Anne's Quai, and from the windows she watched the escape of the wife of the King of Holland's minister, who lived just opposite. This lady was taken out of the back windows into a boat, together with her infant son. Within an hour the house was rifled by the mob, and quantities of rich furniture were tossed out of the windows, and seen floating down the canal. "How the people did pray at that time!" she would say; "thousands united to form the Association of the Perpetual Rosary. It was that which saved the faith of Belgium." She also witnessed the regular troops renounce their allegiance to the King of Holland, and declare for the independence of their country; and often described their marching out of the city in their regimental uniforms, and returning with their coats turned inside out to mark their change, amid the tears and acclamations of the populace. "I never knew before," she would say, "the meaning of the word *turn-coat*."

Amid all her labours and anxieties, her generous solicitude for those whom she loved as her own children enabled her to make every sacrifice ungrudgingly. Her bodily sufferings were often acute, aggravated by the severe austerities which she habitually practised. In familiar conversation with one of her religious, she once admitted that she had done much more in the way of penance when living in the world, than she had been able to do after entering religion. A friend has described her at this time as frequently washing down the stairs, wearing all the time a rough hair-shirt. The rigour of her exterior penances becoming known to her confessor, he sent her to the Teresian nuns, and desired her to follow their prudent and experienced direction on this point. "They distrusted me at first," she said, "but afterwards they explained to me all their practices." Domestic cares and austere penance did not, however, fill up the whole of her life. Her active labours of charity were on so large a scale as to make her name known throughout Bruges. Considering how humble was her position and how small her resources, it appears incomprehensible how she contrived to do all she did. But hers was one of those characters that create for themselves channels of action from their own innate force and greatness. Even her imperfect knowledge of the Flemish language was not suffered to be an obstacle in the way of her charities. She used constantly to visit St. John's Hospital when residing in that parish, and though unable to converse with the sick, she used to take them cakes, and other little dainties, and was known among them by the name of *The Black Vrouwe*, and *The Rich Deba*.[1] She continued her visits to the hospital after removing to St. Anne's Quai, walking thither daily in spite of the distance, to attend a man-servant formerly in the Thompsons' service. She was also in the habit of begging for some of the poor convents, and used to take fresh rolls to the Poor

[1] i.e., Devout woman.

Clares, and entreat the nuns to eat them. Even the poor ecclesiastical students shared her bounty. A friend visiting Bruges, in the service of an English family, was invited to accompany her on an expedition to the seminary, and wondering what could take her thither, her surprise was not diminshed on hearing that she always contrived before vacation time to furnish the students who had no friends with pocket-money or little necessaries. What her own slender means did not supply for these charities, she procured by begging from her friends, both in Bruges and England. She wrote to one, entreating her to send some cast-off wearing apparel fit for the use of ladies, which she designed for a family of respectability, whose pecuniary losses had obliged them to leave England. "I believe," writes Mrs. Thompson, "that while with me, she gave all she had to the poor, and that she spent much time in instructing the ignorant and visiting the sick. Persons also came much to see her." Another member of the family writing since her death, confirms this account, and declares, that as soon as she received any money she gave it to the churches or the poor. Her zeal for the adornment of God's house already suggested wishes which, at that time, seemed impossible to be realized. "When I saw brass lamps hanging in the church of St. Gudule at Brussels," she said, "I used to promise our Lord that I would some day give Him silver ones; and then I would laugh at myself, for at that time I had not a penny." She afterwards had a scruple whether she were not bound to fulfil this promise by presenting such ornaments to this very church. As to making any provision for her own future wants, it was a thought that never occurred to her, until M. Versavel, seeing her profuse liberality, obliged her to pay into his hands a portion of her annual wages, which he kept for her in reserve.

Her life of charity was sustained and invigorated by prayer. Every morning she rose at four and heard an

early Mass in the Church of St. James, where her customary kneeling-place is still pointed out by the people, who, to this day, call it, "*Margarita's sweet corner.*" When she read in the life of Marie Eustelle of her being so often found waiting outside the church-doors in the early mornings, the incident recalled many similar recollections of her own. "I have often stood outside St. James's Church saying my prayers before the doors were opened," she said, "and happy too I thought myself to be there." Returning home after completing her devotions, she applied herself to her household duties; and when she had attended to the wants of the family, devoted the remainder of her time to visiting the churches, the convents, or the poor. The extent of her charitable labours can best be estimated by the lasting memory they have left behind them. "When I visited Bruges, after she first came to Coventry," writes the Right Reverend Bishop Ullathorne, "I found the whole city full of her fame. People of all classes, from the poor to the bankers, came to inquire after her. Her name introduced me to every one. The clergy and superioresses of convents spoke of her with warm interest. I was inquiring my way in the streets of a man of decent appearance, and as he accompanied me, I asked him if he had known Margarita; he told me she used to visit him and be kind to him when sick in the hospital. I asked an old woman who was praying in the Church of St. James where Margarita used to kneel; she at once walked up to a pillar in front of the statue of the Mater Dolorosa, and pointing to a spot behind it said, in a knowing whisper, 'She used to kneel *there*.' And the people of Bruges spoke not only of her goodness and kindness to everybody, but also of her power of giving freedom of heart to scrupulous persons."

This account is fully corroborated by the evidence of those who were eye-witnesses of her daily habits. Visitors from England, after they had stayed a while in Bruges, expressed themselves astonished at the extent of her influ-

ence. The same young friend whose early recollections of her have been quoted in the last chapter describes her pleasure on finding herself introduced to these new scenes under the guidance of Margaret. "My brother Francis," she says, "was at that time staying with the Thompsons, and attending the college, where he was studying languages. We only stayed a month, but during that time I learned to love Mother Margaret, and to esteem her as a saint. Delighted to find myself in a Catholic country for the first time in my life, I wanted to visit every church and convent, and dear Mother Margaret contrived to find time to accompany me. Through her influence I was admitted into the interior at the Poor Clares, the Teresians, and others, for everyone respected her. I well remember how she used to call us into her little oratory to sing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin for the conversion of England. One night, being later than usual, we were passing the door of her room when she followed us, and in her gentle tone said, half reproachfully, 'What! going away without saying good-night to the Blessed Virgin?' Quite ashamed of ourselves we returned and sang the Litany. I assure you no time in the day did we enjoy so much as those few minutes in her humble little room. There was a simplicity about it all that went straight to the heart."

The room here spoken of deserves a passing word of notice. It was at the top of the house, and contained in a curtained recess Margaret's poor straw-bed, the austerity of which is attested by one of her visitors, who being one day indisposed, lay down to rest on this couch of penance, which, as she afterwards complained to her friend, did not offer her any great amount of ease. Attempting to arrange it somewhat more comfortably, she was startled by finding under the coverlid a rough hair-band, while Margaret was equally disconcerted at the discovery. In another part of the room, on a little table arranged and decorated as an altar, stood her great treasure, an image of the Blessed

Virgin. It was given her by M. Versavel, to whom it had been bequeathed by an old woman in Holland, who held it in great veneration, and charged him never to part with it except to some person who would know how to value it. It was of carved wood painted, and possessed no artistic beauty ; nor is anything known of its history, save that its former owner had been assured that it bore the character of being miraculous. Margaret probably valued it above every other earthly possession, and it was before this image that she was accustomed to invite her young friends to pay their evening devotions. " In that room," writes their mother, " my two sons and eldest daughter, when visiting the family with me, would go, before leaving the house, to say a prayer, or sing a hymn, and sometimes sing Vespers." One of the boys here spoken of, afterwards Dr. Amherst, Bishop of Northampton, has often described these pious little meetings. The eves of Our Lady's festivals were generally chosen for singing Vespers, on which occasions the singers arranged themselves before the altar in choir fashion, Margaret being seated on her bed on one side, and the others opposite on whatever seats they could contrive.

In fact, then, as later, the ruling principle of Margaret's life was prayer. With all her energy of character, and her ardent desire to work for God and for souls, she was always true to the principle that far more is done by prayer than by any other means. It has been reported and truly, that during her residence at Bruges she effected the conversion of several Protestants. But she herself declared that the principal means she used for the purpose was prayer. She once acknowledged that she had never been brought in close communication with Protestants without their being converted. " And yet," she added, " I am sure it was not by talking. There was a woman in Bruges whom no one thought would ever be converted. She once lived in the same house with me, and I went nine weeks following to

the altar of Our Lady of Dolours for her. I did not speak to her at all, but at the end of that time she was a Catholic." The first of her Belgian converts she had the happiness of receiving many years later into the Hospital of Incurables at Stone, where she made a happy death.

It is, however, no less true, that her strong words, bearing with them the impress of her strong faith, had at all times great power over the hearts of others; and that on suitable occasions neither her exhortations nor her reproofs were wanting. One friend, now a religious in another order, who knew her intimately during her residence at Bruges, remarks, that nothing struck her more in her intercourse with Margaret, than her total freedom from human respect. No matter who the person might be, if she deemed it a duty to speak, she was withheld by no human consideration. A Protestant lady lodging in the same house thought fit, on one occasion, to rally her on the subject of religion with unbecoming levity. Margaret replied in terms so forcible as effectually to silence her for the future. Her intensity of feeling was not easily restrained, and sometimes betrayed her into a warmth of language which she afterwards regretted. "And yet," says her friend, "nothing could exceed the delicacy of her conscience on the point of charity. Once fearing she had offended me in conversation, though I had not perceived how, she wrote me an earnest apology, ending with the words of the apostle St. James, 'He who offendeth not with his tongue, the same is a perfect man.'" This same friend has acknowledged with touching gratitude how much she owed to her intercourse with Margaret, who endeavoured by every means in her power to deepen her faith, instructing her in many points of Catholic piety, such as devotion to the Sacred Heart, to Our Blessed Lady, and to St. Joseph. No one could be acquainted with her without becoming aware of her thorough instruction in Christian doctrine, and her singular facility in imparting it to

others. " She put the faith into you," said one, " whether you would or no."

During her residence in Belgium, she began for the first time to read some works of Catholic ascetic literature, which exercised a great influence over her interior life. As she grew more familiar with the French and Flemish languages, she collected a few books by the best spiritual writers, which formed her constant study. Many of these she sold on coming to England to obtain means for some of her charitable expenses, but some are still preserved by her community. They consist of the works of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, those of Père Surin which she greatly esteemed, and of Boudon, whose little book entitled " *Dieu Seul*," suggested the motto into which her whole spiritual system was compressed. She used to say that she owed much to a Flemish work entitled, " The Crucified Seraph," which is also preserved, and to these were added the lives of a few of her favourite saints, such as Blessed Angela of Foligno, and St. Catherine of Siena.

Her attention was first directed to the Dominican order by the Abbé Capron, at that time third priest attached to the parish church of St. James. He was a devout and simple-hearted man, who had only been prevented by ill-health from making profession as a Trappist. The rule of the Dominican Tertiaries had always been popular in Belgium, though for a time swept away by the storm of the great Revolution. Religion, however, was now in the process of rapid reconstruction, and the religious orders were beginning to reappear, warmly welcomed by the middle and lower orders, whose devotion to the Catholic faith had survived the political convulsions. The Tertiary Rule, intended for those who desire to consecrate themselves in a special way to the service of God, although unable to enter the cloister, was manifestly most suitable to Margaret in her present position ; but her first attraction was rather to the Franciscan than to the Dominican order. Like

ıost English persons, she had imbibed certain prejudices ɜainst the founder of the Inquisition. "I did not choose ıe Dominican order," she writes in one of her letters, but our Lord, in His mercy, and for His own wise reasons, ɔrced me into it, and I have reason to bless Him for it"; nd she often repeated that it was St. Francis who brought ɐr to St. Dominic. Her prejudice against that "loving ıther," as his children are rightly taught to call him, was ɜmoved by reading his life and that of his great daughter, t. Catherine of Siena; and when she came to study his ıle she felt herself powerfully moved to embrace it. 'hat which chiefly attracted her, as she has again and ɡain declared, was the character of penance which she ɔund impressed upon it. The Abbé Capron, who was ɨimself a Dominican Tertiary, strongly recommended her ɔ enter the order; but to this step M. Versavel offered a ɐecided opposition. His objections are not known, but he ʍas determined and persistent in refusing his consent, and ɾave his penitent to understand that her desire was ɤxtravagant and unreasonable. It is possible he only ɨcted thus with the view of mortifying her will and ɤxercising her in patience and obedience. For eight years Margaret's entreaties on this point were constantly ɐejected; she was even forbidden again to return to the ubject; but what was refused by man, she only the more ɨarnestly sought from God. With the view of recom- ɯending her petition to the intercession of Our Lady, he determined on making a pilgrimage to one of those ɯiraculous shrines which still attract the warm devotion of he Flemish people. The parish church of Assebroeck tands in a sort of sandy desert about five miles out of Bruges. The small marble image known as Our Lady of Assebroeck was only deposited there in the year 1720, ıaving been brought from the East Indies by a pious Fleming, whose devotions to the holy image during his ıomeward voyage so excited the Calvinist bile of the

Dutch sailors, that at last they contemptuously tossed it overboard. The marble image, however, floated on the waves ; and when, in their fury, the sailors sought, by the aid of poles and weights, to force it to the bottom, it continued to elude their violence, and followed the vessel, still floating on the surface of the water. Being recovered by its owner, it was brought in safety to Holland, and after passing through many hands, found its way at length to Assebroeck, where many honours were paid to it, and an annual Novena was ordered to be celebrated by a decree of the Bishop of Bruges. It was probably this public Novena which Margaret determined on attending. But in order to reach Assebroeck in time to hear Mass and communicate, and then return home before the hour when her domestic services would be required, she had to rise at two o'clock in the morning, and to make a painful foot-journey through the sandy roads, in the dark. She persevered in this devotion for nine days, at the end of which time her confessor, without any solicitation on her part, announced to her that he withdrew all his objections to her joining the Dominican order, and that she might do so with his full consent. Her joy was great indeed, enhanced by the feeling that she owed this grace to the intercession of Our Lady. She received the habit on the Feast of the Espousals of St. Catherine of Siena 1834, and on the 30th of April 1835, being the chief feast of the same holy patroness, she made her profession, in the hands of the Abbé Capron. On this occasion she took a vow of perpetual chastity,[1] and often referred to the transport of happiness which she felt on that day, which she always regarded as the real day of her religious profession. All

[1] The profession of a Tertiary living in the world consists in a promise to keep the rule until death, and does not, like religious profession, necessarily include a vow of chastity, which may, however, be added with the approval of the director ; though, in most cases, the vow so taken is not perpetual, but is renewed from year to year. *Conventual* Tertiaries take the three essential vows of religion, and these vows are, of course, perpetual.

e bells of Bruges were ringing to welcome in the month May; but to her heart their chimes seemed to be lebrating her sacred espousals. "On that day," she ould say, "I walked on air, it made me comprehend mething of what it must be to be in an ecstasy!" The ildren of the family whom she had so tenderly reared ared in her joy, and testified their sympathy in their own raceful way. They assembled in the hall to greet her on r return from church; the youngest boy having strewed e ground with roses, and prepared a crown of flowers hich he insisted on placing upon her head. She suffered m to have his way, but remarked to one of his sisters, at "it was much as if they were crowning the devil." he return of her profession-day always renewed her ntiments of devout thankfulness. Writing on its twenty-fth anniversary in 1860, which she kept as her half ubilee, she says: "I ought to love and thank God for all Ie has done for me since that ever-to-be-remembered ay; receiving, as He did, a poor, helpless, friendless, omeless, penniless girl, to be His servant and spouse! It ust have been that God could not find anything more orthless on earth that He chose the veriest nothing to egin and accomplish His own divine ends. May He be lessed for ever! And on this day, also, I crossed the ea and left Bruges for Coventry, only desiring that I night find some place where I might save my soul. Truly God is wonderful in all His works, but most of all in His ondescending love; in making use of such base materials o bring about His great ends."

Whatever may be thought of the manner of life which ve have been attempting to describe, it may be instructive o know in what light Mother Margaret herself was ccustomed to regard it. In a manifestation written at the lesire of a confessor shortly before her last illness, she peaks of her life in Bruges as being "more like that of levout ladies in the world, praying much, going to as

many ceremonies as I could in the church, to the great discontent of those I had to serve ; going very often to the sacraments, but not mortifying myself ; and giving way to temper and self-will to an immense degree, but all the while desiring to be different, and reading much, which has been my greatest good." To these words we must subjoin the significant comments of Bishop Ullathorne. " These," he says, " were the years of her great combats with her strong nature and high spirit ; but whilst this generous soul is accusing herself of *not mortifying* herself, she conceals from us those severe mortifications, fastings and watchings, and those internal sufferings, through which, as well as by the occasions presented by her duties and her bodily sufferings, she was waging incessant war with nature and its irascible propensities."

After her profession, Margaret redoubled the fervour both of her charities and her austerities. Her ardent temperament, however, was tested and purified by many trials, both of mind and body. She had to encounter severe bodily sickness, and interior suffering yet harder to bear. Both one and the other were doubtless part of the providential training of her soul, and it was in that light that she herself always regarded the continual ill-health by which her powerful nature was chastened and subdued. The spinal affection already spoken of assumed from time to time an active form, causing excruciating suffering, added to which she had more than one attack of fever. On one of these occasions she was taken ill, while staying with the family in a hotel, and having no one to attend on her, was left almost without common necessaries. She used to relate how a cat, belonging to the house, one day made its way to her room, bringing in its mouth a raw fish's head that had been given it for its dinner. " I think the creature knew I was in want," she said, " for it laid it on the bed before me, purring with delight, as if asking me to eat it." This little anecdote was elicited by reading a

very similar incident in the life of one of our Dominican saints,—the Blessed Maria Bartholomea Bagnesi.

Her interior trials appear to have arisen in part from that impulse which was constantly urging her to undertake something for God, whilst, at the same time, His divine will in her regard was not as yet manifested. " From the first day I saw her," says Mrs. Amherst, who at that time was much in her society, " she struck me as being full of some great thing for which she could find no vent. Her manner at one and the same time attracted you and kept you at a distance, for you always felt there was something within her that was shared by no living creature." Her sadness and preoccupation were visible to others, and often elicited the kind remonstrances of her mistress, who would affectionately press her to tell the cause of her unhappiness.

" I don't know what makes me unhappy," she would reply ; " I feel I want something, but I don't know what."

The sight of sins and scandals which she was powerless to remedy also occasioned her a distress which to those around her seemed altogether unreasonable, and the same kind friend would advise her at such times not to trouble herself so much about what she could not prevent, often reminding her that she could not expect to set the whole world to rights. Colette, the confidential servant of M. Versavel, also proffered her homely advice, and tried to restrain the impetuosity of that ardent nature which longed to right every wrong with the least possible delay. Colette's words, full of practical good sense, were always well received. She had a great affection and veneration for Margaret, and had the happiness of afterwards welcoming her back to Bruges at a time when her seemingly impossible dreams had been more than realised. When reminded of the days when she had so often proved a wise counsellor, she shook her head incredulously, and, turning to Mother Margaret's companion, said, with a sort of fond smile, " There never was but one Margarita ! "

M. Versavel was often himself the cause of suffering to his penitent, both by the rigour of his direction and by the firmness with which he opposed her commencing any work or embracing any state of life to which he instinctively felt she was not called by God. Her entreaties to be allowed to make another trial of her religious vocation were constantly rejected. "I see," he would say, "that you are intended for *something*, but I do not yet clearly see what it is." He appears to have been secretly convinced that she possessed all the qualities that would fit her to become a religious foundress, and to have been averse to her entering on any course that might hamper her freedom when the moment for beginning her real work should arrive. Thus, among other schemes to which at various times she felt inclined, he obliged her to decline a proposal made to her by the Abbé Carton to assist him in the foundation of his Asylum for the deaf and dumb. Events justified the sagacity of M. Versavel's judgment, guided, as it doubtless was, by the Spirit of God; but at the time the constant thwarting of every proposed plan was naturally felt by his penitent as a painful check.

These mental anxieties reacted on her bodily health, and induced attacks in the head which probably caused her greater suffering than any of her other infirmities. At times her very eyes changed their hue, and appeared, as it were, twisted inwards. This affection increased rather than diminished with time, and was declared by all her medical attendants to be the result of the over-activity of her brain.

Towards the latter part of the year 1839, she was seized with illness of a yet more alarming character, and in the belief that her symptoms indicated the approach of a contagious fever, it was decided to remove her to the Hospital of the Sisters of Charity. The accommodation there provided was of the humblest kind. As the patients were required to bring their own beds, Margaret had to be carried

downstairs and placed in a conveyance, whilst the bed on which she had been lying was rolled up and taken to the hospital for her use. She often spoke of the desolation of heart she experienced at this time. "No one would believe," she said, "what I felt when they placed me in the chair to carry me downstairs and took my bed from under me. Mrs. Lewis was with me, and carried my image of the Blessed Virgin before me: *that* was my only consolation; I do believe she used to talk to me at that time." In the hospital she felt the want of all those comforts to which she had hitherto been accustomed. The room in which she was lodged was small, the mattress lay on the floor, and the food was served in the coarse brown ware used by the poorer classes. But she had hardly entered before the doors were besieged by persons of all ranks, among whom the news had spread that Sister Margaret, as she was called, had been carried to the hospital in a dying state, and who came in crowds to testify their feelings of sympathy and respect. It took one person the whole day to open the door to her visitors, and the concourse was found so troublesome to the community, that the nuns at last requested M. Versavel to put a stop to it. This was related by Mother Margaret herself, and has since her death been confirmed by some of the nuns who perfectly recollect both her illness under their care and the attendant circumstances. "I am sure," she would say, "I don't know why the people came in that way, unless it were that they were so accustomed to see me in church."

She remained at the hospital until partially convalescent, but did not again return to the Thompsons' family. Mrs. Thompson arranged for her reception into the house of the Abbé Capron, where two or three pious persons, Tertiaries like herself, then resided. Here she continued for some time, uncertain as to her future plans, but feeling more powerfully urged than ever "to do something for God." Her soul was meanwhile passing through a very crucible

of desolation and temptation. Her sense of humiliation under these trials was crushing and terrible. Everything appeared like a dark void ; and she described herself as going about from one church to another seeking refuge in prayer from her own pressing thoughts, which would not suffer her to rest.

The lessons she drew from her own experience at this time made her understand, that when God Himself is touching and purifying a soul it is vain, and even injurious, to seek for aid from creatures. " Persons under such trials," she said, " must go to God, and God alone. The less they speak of their troubles to any human being the better. When God afflicts the soul no one can console it, and if they try to do so, they only do harm and increase the suffering. When I was in that state, I sometimes thought I would try and get some consolation from my confessor, but I always found it made matters worse. I was perhaps misunderstood even by holy and spiritual men, and my soul became quite upset. How could it be otherwise ? It is God Himself, at such times, who is touching the soul on some point, and no human creature can give it ease. The only thing is to go on straight in the dark, and act as purely as you can, even though at the time you may *feel* as if you had neither faith, hope, nor charity."

During all this season of trouble the Epistles and Offertories of the Mass seemed to speak to her soul in an extraordinary manner. " When I read them now," she said, " I cannot see in them what I then saw. They always seemed to be saying, *Do something for God.*" Once, as she was praying in St. James's Church, on the Feast of St. Catherine, this interior voice became audible even to her bodily senses ; she heard the words, *Do something for God*, spoken behind her, and that so distinctly that she answered aloud, " Lord, what can I do ? " and looked around to see if someone had not really spoken. She used also to speak of a dream, if dream it were, which left a strong impression

on her mind, wherein she seemed to be going over mountains, followed by great multitudes of people. When first she saw the Welsh hills they reminded her of this dream, and she exclaimed, " Oh, how I long to work for Wales ! Those hills remind me of my dream in Belgium."

By advice of the Abbé Capron, she at length determined on commencing a religious establishment in Bruges. The plan seems to have been to have founded a small community of Dominican Tertiaries, living under religious rule, and devoting themselves to active works of charity.[1] Margaret had long since abandoned all intention of returning to England, and had even bound herself by vow not to do so, trusting nevertheless that she might be able to work for the good of her country-people in a foreign land. She proposed taking in invalid English ladies, or young persons requiring religious instruction, and with this view she hired a good house in Esel Street, where she was joined by one companion, a namesake of her own, whom the Flemings called by the name of *little* Margaret, to distinguish her from the *great* Margaret, with whom they had been so long familiar. M. Versavel, who had discouraged other projects, entered warmly into this. He not only supplied Margaret with the little fund of her own savings which he had hitherto reserved, but increased it from his private resources so as to enable her to furnish her house. When her old and valued friend, Mrs. Amherst, of Kenilworth, paid her second visit to Bruges, she found Margaret about to take possession of her new abode, and was entreated by her not to forget the new foundation on her return to England. " Come back soon," she said, " and for the love of God bring me some old ' Gardens of the Soul,' cate-

[1] This undertaking was not begun without the formal approbation of the authorities of the Order. The document is preserved in which Father Francis Ackerman, Vicar-Provincial of the Order in Belgium, grants his permission for the erection in Bruges of a Congregation of English Sisters of the Third Order, to be under the direction of the Abbé Capron. This document is dated, Ghent, May 5th, 1841.

chisms, and reading-books." "All she wished and prayed for, writes her venerable friend, "was to work for the salvation of souls."

Yet from the first she felt no confidence in the success of this experiment. She continually assured her confessor that "it would not go." Difficulties of all sorts arose to obstruct her progress and very conflicting counsels were offered her in various quarters. The Bishop of Bruges and some of the clergy proposed her trying a foundation in America, while the Dominican authorities were anxious that she should make her novitiate in a French convent, with a view of afterwards returning to Bruges, and founding a convent of the order in that city. To complete her embarrassment, the temporal assistance that had been promised her was diverted into another channel; ridicule was cast upon her plan; and her best friends seemed to disapprove it. An influential priest actively opposed her, and, God so permitting it, even her own director appears to have forgotten that he had ever given encouragement to the undertaking. All these causes combined to produce in her soul a state of mental distress which surpassed all she had hitherto experienced. She has described it herself in a letter, written many years afterwards to a friend, who remarks on the passage, that "it seems to be a revelation of no ordinary soul, and to belong to an order of things only found in the lives of the saints." "Just before I came to England," she writes, "I had a cross that nearly killed me. I had not a friend. My own confessor turned against me, and denied things he had told me to do. I was so poor, so forsaken, that in going through one of the streets of Bruges, I stopped and put my hand to my head, and looked up to heaven and said, 'O God! where shall I find a friend?' I could not paint the anguish of my soul at that moment. But it obtained for me a freedom of soul unknown till then, and the words of the Following of Christ came into my mind, 'In the cross is infusion of

heavenly sweetness,' and these words seemed to convey ease to my tortured brain."

Reduced to actual distress, she endeavoured for a time to support herself by receiving lodgers. But this plan likewise failed, and it was at this critical juncture that she received pressing solicitations from her friend, Mrs. Amherst, to return to England, where there was so much need of those who were willing to work for the glory of God. The proposal was one to which Margaret felt a strong repugnance, and she even believed herself bound by her promise to remain in Belgium. M. Versavel, however, warmly supported Mrs. Amherst's suggestion—a circumstance which at the moment both surprised and wounded his penitent, who was inclined to think him actuated by a desire to be relieved from the responsible charge of her direction. Of this he playfully reminded her in after years, appealing at the same time to the providential results of the course he had recommended in proof that he had been guided in his decision by the Spirit of God. Whatever may have been her own sentiments, she left the decision in the hands of him to whom she was bound by her vow of obedience, and by his desire addressed to Mrs. Amherst the following letter, which is the earliest from her hand that has been preserved, and will convey the best idea that can be formed of her sentiments at this important crisis :—

"BRUGES, 1842.

"RESPECTED MADAM,—I hope you will excuse the liberty I take in writing to you : it is the wish of my confessor. As you expressed an interest in my regard, he wished me to ascertain from you if there were any probability of my being employed in England in any way for the poor. The reason, Madam, he wishes me to ask this of you is—the Dominicans have been here, and intend establishing a convent here, or at Ghent, in about a year. They wished me to go for a time to Paris to learn the rule,

and also to speak French, there being a convent of the order in that place ; but M. Versavel and the Superior of the Jesuits here prefer my going to England, thinking I should be more profitably employed in the service of my neighbour. They would wish to know how or in what manner I am likely to be situated before I give a decided answer to the Dominicans. For me, Madam, you may dispose of me as you may judge fit. I am ready to employ myself in any manner for the salvation of souls, as I am told by those who conduct me that it is the will of God and what He requires of me. I shall feel greatly obliged by an answer in a few weeks. I remain, most respected Madam, yours very gratefully and humbly,

MARGARET MARY HALLAHAN."

On receipt of this letter Mrs. Amherst opened a communication with the Rev. Dr. Morgan of Uttoxeter, who was then in want of a schoolmistress and sacristan, and he was sufficiently pleased with the account he received of Sister Margaret to agree to receive her. Want of means, however, obliging him to give up his design, Mrs. Amherst next applied to the Rev. Dr. Ullathorne, O.S.B., who had lately been appointed to the neighbouring mission of Coventry, in the prosperity of which Mrs. Amherst was greatly interested. Her representations of Margaret's rare qualities satisfied Dr. Ullathorne that she would prove a valuable assistant in all his plans for the good of his congregation, and he empowered Mrs. Amherst, therefore, to engage her services. Before this could be done, however, Dr. Ullathorne received the unexpected intelligence of his appointment to the bishopric of Hobart Town, in Australia. He wrote at once to Mrs. Amherst, explaining the difficulty, but adding that he hoped to decline the bishopric, in which case he should still be ready to receive Sister Margaret at Coventry.

Mrs. Amherst was not deterred by this threatened ob-

stacle from persevering in her design, and the better to ensure its success, she addressed a letter to the Venerable Bishop Walsh, Vicar-Apostolic of the Midland District, in which she strongly recommended that some steps should be taken without delay to secure Sister Margaret's establishment in England. "Margaret Hallahan," she wrote, "is a person who has been living in Bruges for the last fifteen years, and is now desirous of coming to England to dedicate herself to the service of religion in any way that may be pointed out to her, either by instructing the ignorant, teaching a poor school, taking care of the sick, making converts, or bringing back stray sheep—in fact, doing anything for the love of God. She would make a very valuable priest's housekeeper. Her manner and appearance command respect from everyone. She is of the Third Order of St. Dominic, and consequently accustomed to great abstemiousness, and she would expect very little beyond her board and lodging. The priests in Bruges have advised her to go to America; but it is a great pity that her services should be lost to this country."

The persevering efforts of this excellent lady met with the success they deserved, and, indeed, to her keen discernment of Margaret's high qualifications, and her unwearied exertions in bringing these troublesome negotiations to a happy issue, must, under God, be attributed the decisive step which was to bring about such important results. Her recommendation awakened the interest of Bishop Walsh, and he replied to her letter in the following terms:—"The person of whom you speak so highly must not be lost to this diocese; bring her over to England by all means, and if she does not go to Coventry, I will take her myself." Mrs. Amherst accordingly wrote to Margaret, inviting her to her own house until something could be definitely settled, and asking what she would expect for her services from any priest in whose mission she might be established. Margaret replied with characteristic dis-

interestedness :—" Wherever I go they must board and lodge me. I have clothes enough for five years, and at the end of that time, if I have given satisfaction, they will not like to see me in rags, and will give me new ones." In the meantime, as it now appeared certain that Dr. Ullathorne would be allowed to remain at Coventry, he was anxious that Sister Margaret should be established there without delay, as mistress of the girls' school, in which office he trusted that she would likewise exercise a beneficial influence over the young women employed in the ribbon weaving, some of whom belonged to his congregation, while many more, as he had reason to believe, were likely to be gathered into the Church.

The following letter was written from Bruges, in reply to one from Mrs. Amherst, conveying to Margaret a statement of Dr. Ullathorne's views and wishes.

" BRUGES, 1842.

" MOST RESPECTED MADAM,—I read your condescending letter to M. Versavel, who was much pleased with its contents, and said it was the exact state of life he had been wishing for me for some time, and he desires me to accept it, which I do most joyfully. . . . Any arrangement the Rev. Dr. Ullathorne may make in my regard will be agreeable to me. I have but one motive in view, the salvation of souls, which, with the help of Divine grace, I hope I may be the instrument of. I feel most grateful for your goodness to me, and I shall endeavour to merit it, by doing all in my power to comply with what the Rev. Dr. Ullathorne may require of me. It will be the end of April before I can leave Bruges, and I shall be obliged to go for a short time to Isleworth ; after that I am quite at your disposal. I remain, most respected Madam, yours most respectfully and humbly, MARGARET MARY HALLAHAN."

The entire abandonment to the will and judgment of her

superiors, expressed in these letters, reveals nothing of the sacrifice which it cost the writer to obey. In reality, she felt an indescribable reluctance to quit Belgium, where she had for fifteen years imbibed habits and ideas to which the ways of English life would, she well knew, prove sadly at variance. She protested to M. Versavel, that to return to this Protestant country " was like going to hell," and she only at length yielded in virtue of obedience. Nor were these feelings diminished on her first experience of the contrast. " When I returned to England, after being so many years in Belgium," she said, " I cannot say how distressed I was at the vice I saw everywhere around me. Every face seemed to bear the stamp of mortal sin. They all looked like so many lumps of flesh without souls ; the very atmosphere seemed full of sin. At first I thought it had an effect upon the sun, and that it was the sins of the people that made the air so dark and foggy." Afterwards, however, when she found the field of usefulness that was open to her in Coventry, she became reconciled to the change, and wrote to M. Versavel, praising the virtue of holy obedience, and telling him how it had been rewarded.

It was on the 30th of April 1842 that she crossed from Belgium and landed in England. After a brief visit to her old friend, Madame Caulier, who then resided at Isleworth, she set out for Kenilworth, where Mrs. Amherst had kindly prepared to receive her, intending herself to introduce her to the scene of her future labours. She was met at the station by one of the household, who found her in great tribulation, surveying a box, out of which there appeared to be flowing a stream of oil. The box contained her precious books, together with a bottle of St. Philomena's oil, the use of which had not at that time been introduced into England. On their way to Kenilworth they lamented over the loss of the oil, and the supposed injury of the books ; but when the box was opened, they discovered, to their

surprise, that neither was the bottle broken, nor one drop of the oil spilt. They came to the conclusion that the mischief had been remedied through the intercession of St. Philomena, and in after years Mother Margaret would often recall this little incident, and add that St. Philomena ought to do something for her, for she had been the first to bring her to England. She stayed for a few days at Kenilworth, and thence proceeded to Coventry, thus entering on the humble commencement of a work, destined, in the designs of God, to be so fruitful, in Our Lady's month of May, being then in the fortieth year of her age.

CHAPTER III

1842-1845

THE Catholic mission of Coventry, belonging then as now to the Benedictine Order, had been placed under the care of the Rev. Dr. Ullathorne in the November of 1841. Previous to receiving this appointment, Dr. Ullathorne had for eight years led a laborious life as missionary in Australia, where he filled the office of Vicar-General, and had become known to the English public by his important exertions on behalf of the convict population. His immediate predecessors at Coventry had been the Rev. Robert Alexis Pope, and the Rev. Stephen Barber. The small chapel attached to the mission stood at the top of Hill Street, and had been erected in the year 1807. It was an unpretending brick structure, and already began to show signs of dilapidation. The priest's house was not in a much better condition ; the rooms were small, and scantily furnished, and the walls in many places exhibited alarming cracks. A good schoolroom had been erected close to the chapel by Father Cockshoot, and an efficient schoolmaster was in charge of the boys, but no girls' school had yet been organised. The congregation, though poor and not very numerous, was animated with a good spirit, which led the people to respond with readiness to every measure of improvement set on foot by their pastor. English Catholics were at that time only beginning to recover from a long period of repression and dis-

couragement. Things were indeed a good deal changed since the days when Margaret and her young companions had encountered the stones and hootings of the Margate idlers on their way to chapel; but though important advantages had been secured to the Catholics by the Act of Emancipation, it was only by degrees that they learnt to feel their freedom. Many practices and devotions now familiar to us were introduced with hesitation, and it was some time before the Church could assume anything of that exterior order and beauty which is her natural inheritance. Even after all active persecution had ceased, Catholics were for many years deterred by prudence, as well as poverty, from bestowing much care on the externals of religious worship. Living by sufferance, and conscious of a jealous hostility on the part of those who formally tolerated them, they felt it necessary to avoid anything that could draw on them the notice of Protestants, whilst at the same time the limited resources at the command of the Catholic clergy barely sufficed for the supply of essentials, and rendered any lavish expenditure on architectural adornment impossible. But certain influences were already at work, the combined effect of which brought about much of that beneficial change witnessed among us during the second half of the nineteenth century. Mother Margaret's first arrival at Coventry took place about the time when the Passionist fathers were beginning their first religious house at Aston, and exactly one year after the Fathers of Charity had established themselves at Loughborough. Father Gentili, whose connexion with England dated from the year 1835, was on the eve of commencing those astonishing missionary labours to which the Catholics of this country are so much indebted, and the extent of which will best be appreciated when we remember that the six brief years during which they lasted sufficed to consume his vital strength.[1] The

[1] Father Dominic, the Passionist, arrived in England in October,

tide of conversion from Anglicanism had not yet set in, though the Oxford movement was directing the thoughts of many towards the Church. Some individual conversions, however, had already taken the world by surprise, such as that of Father Spencer, who had begun his apostolate of prayer for the conversion of England; while Father Mathew was accustoming English minds to the novel idea of a great movement of social reform headed by a Catholic priest. Another kind of reform was being worked out by the genius of the elder Pugin, and the result of his labours had, indirectly, an influence, not only artistic, but spiritual. And last, though not least, we must notice the immense work effected in England by the exertions of Cardinal Wiseman, whose appointment as coadjutor to Bishop Walsh took place in the year 1840, and who had already begun to carry out one of the cherished purposes of his life,—the propagation in this country of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. How truly he appreciated the needs of the Church, and how early he had resolved on the means of supplying them whenever the occasion was presented, may be gathered from a letter, addressed by him to Father Ignatius Spencer in the year 1839, being at that time Rector of the English College at Rome. This letter bears so directly on some subjects which will naturally recur in the following pages, that we shall make no apology for quoting it. After saying that he has long made it his daily prayer that he may be "made instrumental in bringing back devotion to the Holy Eucharist, Its daily celebration, frequent communion, and public worship in England, together with devotion to the Blessed

1841, and settled at Aston, near Stone, in February, 1842. Father Gentili first came to England in 1835, and spent three years directing the studies at Prior Park. After a short visit to Rome he returned to this country in 1840, and took up his residence at Grace Dieu Manor. In May, 1841, the first regular community of Fathers of Charity was formed at Loughborough, and in October the following year Father Gentili removed thither, and began those celebrated missions in which he laboured without intermission until his death in 1848.

Virgin, chiefly through the propagation of the Rosary," he goes on to express his hope "that ere long acts of public reparation may be offered in England to the Blessed Sacrament, and that the devotion of the Forty Hours may even be introduced; and that the common practice of keeping the Most Holy Sacrament in the sacristy cupboard, and without a light, may soon be abandoned." This practice had, indeed, been forced on English Catholics as a security against sacrilege in difficult times, but he ardently longs for the time when such security may be purchased in some other way than what has always seemed to him another kind of sacrilege. With regard to the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he proposes the establishment of confraternities of the Holy Rosary, and mentions having offered two of the English Dominican Fathers to write a little treatise on this devotion if they would undertake to disseminate it in England. And he dwells on the special reason, which, in his opinion, points out the Rosary as peculiarly adapted to our present needs. It is the prayer of the simple, and therefore the best prayer we can use to overcome the predominant national vice of pride.[1]

It will not be thought too much to say that the work accomplished by Mother Margaret, during the twenty-six years that elapsed from her return to England until her death, contributed in its measure to swell that tide of religious revival which, like all great streams, is formed and fed by the confluence of many a slender rivulet. The humble commencement of her labours at Coventry coincided, as we have seen, in point of time, with the establishment of two religious bodies of foreign missionaries, whose influence naturally tended to infuse a warmer spirit into English Catholic devotions; whilst the objects which lay nearest to her heart, and on the promotion of which, so

[1] This interesting letter is printed at length in the *Life of Father Ignatius Spencer*, p. 253.

far as they lay within her province, she lavished all her energies and all her resources, were precisely those which our illustrious Cardinal has enumerated in the above-cited passage.[1] Her solicitude in these respects, subjecting her, as it often did, to grave misconceptions, receives a singular support and justification when we compare it with his ; and it is interesting thus to glance at the points of contact between two souls as widely separated in their social position as in the quality of their natural gifts.

Yet who could have foretold that any co-operation in such great designs should have been in store for her on the day when she first stood in the priest's parlour at Coventry —to use her own words, "a poor, helpless, friendless, homeless, penniless woman ! " Not, indeed, that a discerning eye could fail to discover in that simple exterior a soul richly gifted by God, and fitted for great things. In the person of that priest she met the appointed guide destined by her Divine Master to complete her spiritual formation, and to share in her work as co-founder of the religious institute which owed so much to his fostering care in its early years, and to his paternal protection after it had attained maturity. " I shall never forget my first meeting with her," he writes, " in the little house I then occupied at Coventry. She was then in her vigour, well-proportioned, very erect, and having an expression of dignity and simplicity combined, yet with a spiritual softness pervading features that indicated her remarkable powers of mind and heart. It seized me with a sense of surprise as well as of gratification. I at once felt that Mrs. Amherst's promise

[1] The identity of their views on these points will occur to anyone at all familiar with Mother Margaret's words and acts. Her dislike of the sacristy cupboards, in particular, often found expression. Not long before her death, having visited a chapel in which the Blessed Sacrament was thus reserved, she knelt in adoration before It for a few minutes ; then, rising, turned to her companion, saying, in a tone of distress, " Of course, it is done for safety, but they might at least be *clean* ; truly my vocation is to provide a home for the Blessed Sacrament."

that I should find in her a valuable co-operator in my mission was far more than realised. She wore a plain black stuff dress closed to the throat; her hair was cut off her head, and upon it she wore the plainest of Belgian caps, such as are used by the poor. To this, when she went out, she added the Belgian cloak and black chip bonnet and veil. Even then her ankles were so weak that walking out was a difficulty, and more than once she fell down in the street."

The first thing necessary was to settle the precise terms on which she was to enter on the duties of her situation. But when requested to state the salary she would require as schoolmistress, she replied by warmly repudiating all thoughts of being paid at all. In fact, she never could understand how people could endure to be paid for doing anything for Almighty God. "I often think," she once remarked, "what madness it seemed, my coming over to Coventry without a penny in the world. And the best of it was, I did not want them to give me any money. I wonder if the bishop remembers how indignant I was when he asked me what salary I should require for teaching his school. 'Salary!' I said, 'I am come for the sake of Almighty God, and not for money.' Then he said he supposed I should want clothes; but I replied I had plenty. I was so affronted, the rich ladies at first did not know what to make of me." Such was her own account of her first introduction to Coventry, and the incident, so characteristic of her spirit, revealed to her new director that in Sister Margaret he had to deal with no ordinary soul. But he prudently allowed nothing of this impression to appear, and left her to make her own way in the humble duties assigned her.

It had been arranged that she should reside in the priest's house, where her first experiences were far from cheering. She occupied a very small kitchen in company with the old housekeeper, whose jealousy and crabbed temper made her

life far from easy. Her bedroom was a poor attic, containing no furniture but a rickety bed and one very old chair. The walls were stained with damp and mildew and in many places exhibited wide cracks. Her position was desolate enough. She was occasionally invited to the parlour by Dr. Ullathorne, who always remained struck after these interviews by her modest reserve, her discreet language, and her gratitude for his proffered kindness. But she was ere long deprived of this comfort and support. Within a fortnight after her arrival at Coventry, Dr. Ullathorne found himself obliged to proceed to Rome in order to get the question of his appointment to the Australian bishopric finally negatived. The mission was meanwhile placed under the care of the Rev. Mr. Clarkson, the assistant priest, and Sister Margaret was left to find out work for herself, in a place where she was a total stranger. On Dr. Ullathorne's return after a few months' absence, he found that she had collected a school of 200 girls, whom she was teaching unaided ; that she had already acquired considerable influence among the young factory women, as well as the weavers who worked in their own houses, and that in addition to her school duties she had found out all the sick poor of the congregation, and was constantly engaged in visiting them. She had likewise prepared a very large class of First Communicants, and had made every preparation for celebrating the great day after the Belgian fashion, with a festal solemnity altogether new in Coventry. Her ordinary manner of life was to rise at five, after which she performed her morning devotions and prepared the chapel for Mass. If there were any very urgent case of sickness she sometimes contrived to visit it before breakfast, but punctually at nine o'clock she was in the schoolroom ; and her exactness on this point was so great that, as she has herself let us know, she made it a matter of confession if she were a minute or two after time. The school closed at twelve and re-opened at two, and the

interval was given to dinner, visiting any sick who were near at hand, and preparing for afternoon school, which lasted from two to five. She arranged the school on the plan of that at Somers Town, dividing it into classes taught by monitresses. She always taught one class each day herself, so as to go through the whole each week ; and she used to walk about from class to class asking the angel-guardians of the children to teach them. " I think they must have heard me," she said, " for though I was myself so ignorant, the parents always seemed satisfied, and said the children got on." Between five and seven she found time to say Our Lady's office, and to satisfy other devotions ; sometimes she again visited the sick, in which case one of the young women of the congregation undertook to prepare the schoolroom for the night school, which was open from seven till ten : on Saturdays, when there was no school, she visited the more distant cases, especially in the district known as Foleshill. A certain number of the factory girls lived at Foleshill, of whom the larger proportion were Methodists ; but so great was their attachment to Sister Margaret that troops of them would accompany her home, singing hymns to the Blessed Virgin all the way. Neither severity of weather nor her own manifold infirmities ever kept her at home when her presence was called for. One winter's night, when she had been detained unusually late visiting a poor woman in typhus fever, she had to return home after dark. A pond without any fence lay in her way, and the ground being covered with snow, she had missed the path. She came home drenched with water up to the waist, and could never say how she had passed this dangerous spot, though she always retained the impression that she had been supernaturally carried through it. On first coming to Coventry she had so completely forgotten English ways that she asked to be shown the quarter where the " nobles " lived, imagining all the smartly-dressed girls who came to Mass

on Sundays, and who were mostly ribbon-weavers, must be of the " noble " class. When she came to understand the state of English society a little better, she was shocked and distressed at the depth of poverty which she discovered. To relieve it, she sold a number of her most valuable books, and could not understand how the kind Providence of God could leave any of His creatures in such necessity, until Dr. Ullathorne pointed out to her that without these sufferings many probably would never save their souls. There were at that time many poor creatures at Coventry suffering from frightful incurable diseases, who, on that account, were left destitute of all attendance. One of these was a poor woman covered with sores which bred enormous worms. She could not bear Sister Margaret to leave her, and would make her sit by her bedside for hours together. " I was very frightened of the worms," she said, in relating this circumstance, " and could not help starting when they crawled my way." There was another sufferer in a half putrid state, who was deaf in one ear, so that when the priest had to hear her confession he was obliged to lean over her, and speak into the other ear, regardless of the intolerable effluvium. Another case was that of a poor woman bent quite double in a position that rendered it impossible for her to lie down, or even to sit without support. She had even to be fed by others. When her husband went out to his work in the morning he used to tie her to the bedpost to prevent her falling out of her chair, and then leave her, dependent through the day on the chance kindness of neighbours. Sister Margaret visited this poor woman daily, taking with her such better kind of food as she could procure, and feeding her with her own hands. She found her quite ignorant of religion, and took infinite pains in instructing her. Suffering as she was in body, the invalid was absorbed with delight as the truths of faith opened on her mind. She used to say she could not be grateful enough for being allowed to hear of such

beautiful things, and Sister Margaret often declared that the sight of her faith and devotion was such a joy that "it set her up for the day."

She was greatly assisted in her attendance on the sick by some of the young women of the congregation who attached themselves to her person and delighted in sharing her labours. One of these undertook to take care of a case which was altogether extraordinary. It was that of a woman who had taken to her bed, in the first instance out of pure sloth, but who fell at last into such a state of dirt and disease that no one would go near the house. Miss Goode, however, hearing that she was dying without help, proceeded to the spot, and finding the house-door locked, made her entrance by the window, undertook the difficult task of cleansing the room and the poor patient, and waited on her with the utmost devotion till the day of her death. All these deeds of charity were amply recompensed. Every one of the sufferers above spoken of were received into the Church, and died happily, their extraordinary sufferings seeming to dispose them for the faith and to procure them unusual graces.

Such was the mode of life on which Sister Margaret had already entered during Dr. Ullathorne's absence, and the amount of good which she had effected almost single-handed confirmed him in the impression he had already formed regarding her. At the same time, her difficulties with the old housekeeper came to his knowledge, and blaming her for keeping him in ignorance of what she had suffered, he dismissed the old woman, engaged a girl in her place, and placed the housekeeping in Sister Margaret's hands—an arrangement which continued so long as she remained under his roof. Sister Margaret took occasion of his return to make a Spiritual Retreat under his direction. It appears, from letters dated August and September 1842, that before definitely placing herself under his guidance, the consent of Father Henry Whiteside, then

Provincial of the English Dominicans, was asked and obtained. Sister Margaret was accustomed from time to time to receive from him the absolution from faults against the rule, and considered herself strictly under the obedience of the Order. In one of his letters, Father Whiteside reminds her that Tertiaries are not at liberty to remove from one place to another without the knowledge of their religious superiors. Her work and her manner of life were known and thoroughly approved by him. " Continue," he writes, " to do all the good which Almighty God has given you the means of doing, and you will thereby secure to yourself the blessing of our Holy Founder and the approbation of your religious superiors in the Order." At the bottom of one of these letters appear a few lines of comment in Sister Margaret's handwriting :—" You see how fast they have bound me ; I am very glad of it ; I like obedience.—M.M.H."

The notes and meditations of the above mentioned retreat were found among Mother Margaret's papers. She entered on it with extraordinary fervour, and during its course made a general confession of her whole life, which cost her many days of great labour and much interior suffering. The habit of her soul, which shrank from introspection and led her to rest on God as the one object of thought and affection, made any long or minute exercise of self-examination a kind of spiritual torture to her. She was accustomed to say, that when forced to fix her eye on herself, she could only make a great sign of the cross over the abyss, and go on, looking up to God. The following letter, addressed by her to her director, gives us a glance into her interior of no little interest. The reader will know in what way to interpret the strong expressions of self-condemnation which it contains :—

" Very Rev. and Dear Father,—The reason I have for making a general confession to you is, that you may

have a true knowledge of my interior, and judge what life of penance I should lead after so many years spent in an entire forgetfulness of God, and an indulgence of all my evil propensities ; but this I could not bring myself to do, were it not for an inward conviction I feel that I am likely to remain under your guidance, and a wish I have also to bind myself entirely to God by a vow of obedience to repair in some measure the liberty I have always given my will, and to curb that feeling of pride, self-will, and independence which predominates in me. I have ever hoped it of God, that He would in His mercy send me a director who would in all things enable me to distinguish and accomplish His holy will, and whom I could sufficiently respect and fear, as well as love ; for I am ashamed to say love alone would have but little weight with me. So strange a nature do I possess, that I advance more with a just severity than being treated with too much lenity. It gives some pain to nature to acknowledge this, but you tell me I must act as a little child, and I will endeavour to do it now, for I see how wonderfully God has disposed all things to bring me here. I would fain believe that it is God's will I should be guided by you, but this may be a delusion. I submit it to your judgment ; but it is also true that God has ordained some souls to be conducted to perfection by guides whom He must have elected from all eternity to that end. We read of it in many lives of the saints. I also feel, and it is a continual reproach to me, that I missed my vocation in my younger years by my own infidelity to grace ; for from the time I can remember I have always had the same attraction for a life wholly devoted to God, and never till I came here did I ever feel for one moment I was doing the will of God. But is it His will or not ?—that I sometimes doubt. As our feelings so often deceive us, the reasons why I have a desire to make a vow of obedience are many. First, because every spiritual book points out that we give nothing to God without our

will, which is only given by obedience; 2d., because I always feel it was through my own neglect I have not made the solemn vows of religion, and which I wish to repair by all the means in my power; and 3d., because it is the virtue most opposite to my nature, and that which I feel the most difficult to practise; for I frequently find that with me the very thing I like to do, when ordered by obedience becomes irksome. I also have so many inspirations which continually urge me to it. May God enlighten you to guide me as His holy will requires."

We gather from her own notes, written during this Retreat, that her chief object in making it was to settle the doubts which had so long harassed her regarding her choice of a state of life. She speaks of the necessity of having a guide "who will combat that interior pride, self-will, and horror of all those humiliations and works of penance which you, O Lord, so continually urge me to perform. I feel," she continues, "that I can do nothing of myself, and that without this guide I shall be lost. Obedience then must be the virtue I must practise to its full extent."

These notes were written for her own eye alone. But in her communications with her director she used the same language, "representing herself as one who had a strong, wayward, and independent nature that had never been controlled, as wishing to serve God, though she had never yet served Him, and as desiring to cultivate her soul, as though the entire work had yet to be begun."

"In her self-depreciation," writes Bishop Ullathorne, after referring to the letter quoted above, "she omits the fact, that for twenty years she had been under the guidance of a most strict as well as able director, to whom she had bound herself by vow, and that it was he who withheld her from entering religion. Freed from that vow when she came to England, she wished to bind herself anew by vow to my direction, but although practically, up

to the time of her profession as a conventual religious, her whole life was one of obedience, I did not judge it expedient to receive the proposed vow."

At the very time that Sister Margaret was thus seeking to place herself entirely under obedience to the guide whom God had given her, circumstances seemed once more to threaten her with the deprivation of his fatherly care. It has been said that Dr. Ullathorne's visit to Rome had been made with the view of declining an Australian bishopric. Whilst the plan for the establishment of the Australian hierarchy was in course of organization, he had been nominated first to the bishopric of Hobart Town, and then to that of Adelaide, but succeeded in declining both appointments. The Rev. Dr. Willson of Nottingham was appointed Bishop of Hobart Town, and his consecration took place at St. Chad's, Birmingham, on the 28th of October, 1842.[1] On that occasion Dr. Ullathorne attended and read the briefs as Bishop Willson's secretary. He had never lost his interest in the colony where he had spent so many years of fruitful labour, and though he desired to decline the burden of the episcopate, he was perfectly willing to have returned to Australia as a simple missioner, had such been the will of his superiors. At the conclusion of the ceremony, whilst the new bishop was unvesting in the sacristy, Dr. Ullathorne said to him, " I was determined not to be bishop, but now that the mitre is on your head and not on mine, I should not mind going out and working under you, with permission of the superiors." Dr. Willson eagerly accepted the proposal, and finding that Dr. Ullathorne was really indifferent whether he worked in England or Australia, he expressed his intention of writing the following day to Dr. Barber, the President of

[1] In the " English Catholic Directory," and the Roman " Notizie," the date of Bishop Willson's consecration is erroneously given as April 22. The authority for the above correction is the Bishop's own private journal.

the English Benedictines, with the view of securing for his diocese the services of so valuable a missioner. On his return to Coventry, Dr. Ullathorne acquainted Sister Margaret with what had passed, but she only replied, " You will not go ; the Blessed Virgin will take care of that." She at once communicated the threatened change to those among the congregation with whom she had any influence, and set them all to pray. Many of them prayed all that night, so greatly did they dread the possibility of losing their valued pastor. The end of the affair was sufficiently remarkable. Dr. Ullathorne heard no more on the subject, and shortly afterwards Bishop Willson sailed for Australia without having written, as he proposed, to Dr. Barber, and without making any fresh application to Dr. Ullathorne, or offering any explanation of his change of plans. But in the first letter which he wrote to his friend after his arrival in Australia there occurred the following passage : " The next time I see you I shall have to go on my knees." The next time they did meet was some years later, when Dr. Ullathorne was Vicar-Apostolic of the Western District, and Bishop Willson, then on a visit to England, came to see him at Prior Park. In the course of conversation, Bishop Ullathorne having referred to what had passed between them, Bishop Willson sprang from his seat, saying, " I'll go on my knees this minute ! " He then explained that he had the pen in his hand, and was on the point of writing to Dr. Barber, when the thought struck him that there was something in the whole business he did not see through. How was it that one who possessed so much influence in Australia should refuse to return thither as bishop, and yet consent to do so as a private missionary ? He ended by concluding that it was safest to have nothing to do with the affair, and sailed for Australia without making the application to the President. On his arrival at Sydney he soon found the groundlessness of his suspicions, and hence the expression in his letter, that

when they next met he should have to go on his knees. Mother Margaret liked to repeat this story, and was wont to attribute the frustration of Bishop Willson's plan to the prayers of the people of Coventry, adding, " I was right after all ; the Blessed Virgin did not let him go."

In the meantime her influence among the young women of the congregation went on daily increasing. They grew to feel towards her as a mother, won by that singular power of attracting hearts of which so many who approached her were conscious. On this point we can do no better than quote the language of one whose testimony must carry with it the greatest amount of authority. " Over the people, and especially over the young women employed in ribbon-weaving," writes Bishop Ullathorne, " she exercised a spiritual influence in a very unusual degree. I have often asked myself what was the secret of that marvellous influence which she exercised ; and I believe that it lay not only in that great, warm, loving soul of hers, that was always going to God, but also in her faith in other souls, in what they are, in what they have latent in them, and in what they are capable of. Then she loved souls so much, and they felt her love." And he adds, that amongst these young persons the name of Sister Margaret soon became " a household word." She succeeded in inducing them to avoid occasions of danger and vanity by modesty of dress, and caution in their demeanour. For herself, she united a wonderful freedom of spirit, and even of manner, with great strictness in all that concerned the keeping aloof from the world. She cherished the religious character which she had assumed by her profession and her vow as jealously as any inmate of a cloistered convent ; and even the Protestants of Coventry seem to have understood that the plainly-dressed priest's housekeeper had something of the nun about her. A story is told of some of the young Catholic girls of Coventry persuading her to accompany them one Easter Monday to see St. Michael's Church.

That venerable relic of Catholic times, the spire of which forms one of the most remarkable features in any view of the city of Coventry, was not at that time shown to the public without a fee, except on the holiday in question. When Sister Margaret and her companions entered the church, the service was going on, and a tolerably large congregation was present. Sister Margaret told them to take her at once to the Ladye Chapel, and there kneeling down, she recited with them aloud the Litany of Our Lady, with the intention of recovering that beautiful building to the Catholic Church. When it was finished, she rose and walked out again, without looking at anything around her, whilst the old beadle exclaimed to her companions, "Why that's *an old nun!* you shouldn't go about with an old nun!" This story spread far and wide, and got very much misrepresented; but it is a fair example of her habitual mastery of the temptation to human respect.

She had a great horror of that weakness, and in various ways tried to teach her young companions to deliver themselves from its slavery. Once when she was going out to visit the sick, accompanied by her friend, Miss Goode, she asked the latter to carry a parcel, of rather formidable size, containing necessaries for the poor. Miss Goode did not altogether relish the proposal, and said she would give a penny to some child who would carry it for them. "No," said Sister Margaret, "I will carry it myself." On this her companion entreated to be allowed to take it, but Sister Margaret was firm in her refusal. "You are not worthy of carrying it," she said, "as you are ashamed of it." She then told her that in her youth she had felt the same false shame at carrying parcels in the streets, and to conquer herself she bought the largest band-box she could find, and carried it down one of the principal streets in London. Probably the relation of this notable example had its effect on the hearer, for she did not refuse to accompany Sister Margaret on a certain expedition to

Nuneaton, which demanded no little sacrifice of human respect. The whole distance is now traversed by railway; but in those days the journey thither was a more serious affair. No public conveyance plied between Nuneaton and Coventry, and the only plan which Miss Goode could suggest was, that they should go with the butcher's son when he paid his weekly visit in his cart. Sister Margaret consented to this, and in due time they arrived at Nuneaton, without any disaster. But when, after dispatching their charitable business, the time came for them to return, they found, to their dismay, that the passengers in the cart were increased to four, by the presence of a young calf which the butcher had purchased, and was about to convey to Coventry. Sister Margaret, whose farm-yard experience was not very extensive, was apprehensive lest the calf should bite, and was only reassured on beholding it safely enveloped in a net. It proved a very harmless companion, and only consoled itself during its imprisonment by sucking the end of Miss Goode's silk dress. The assistance rendered by this faithful and devoted friend, the first companion who joined Sister Margaret's Community at Coventry, the last who watched by her bed of death, proved a great support and consolation to her. When their acquaintance ripened into mutual confidence, Miss Goode discovered, to her surprise, that Sister Margaret was carrying on her life of incessant and exhausting labour in spite of bodily infirmities, which would have reduced one of less energetic spirit to the condition of an invalid. The inflammation in her eyes obliged her constantly to wear a green shade; and a distressing eruption covered her whole person, with the exception of her face, which was never in any way disfigured, and gave no indication of what she at times suffered. In after life she often spoke of these hidden maladies as an answer to prayer. When her whole body was in a most suffering state chance visitors would sometimes compliment her on looking so well.

"You see," she would say to one of her religious sisters, "I shall get no sympathy. Every one says how well I look. It is just as it should be. I have always prayed that God would let me suffer and work." The scalp of the head was affected in a particular manner, and at the time we speak of, the consequent discomfort was increased from her having hitherto had no one to assist her with that tender and delicate care of which she stood so much in need. This care was now effectually supplied by her new friend, who, with another young person, equally devoted to Sister Margaret's person, gladly relieved her of some of her laborious duties, and assisted her in every work of charity.

Their wonder at the courage which could persevere in such a daily course as that embraced by Sister Margaret was increased as they gradually discovered more and more of the austerity of her life. The Dominican rule prescribes the wearing of serge garments next the skin, and though this point is not obligatory on a secular Tertiary, Sister Margaret considered herself bound by it; and not being able to purchase the material in question, she substituted in its place under-garments of the very coarsest brown wrapping, such as is used for covering luggage. This mortification was the severer from the exceedingly tender and irritable state of her skin, nor could she be induced by any argument to give up the practice. She spent nothing on herself. Even the clothes which her friends at Kenilworth sometimes sent for her own use were given away as soon as received. The consequence was that she was often short of actual necessaries, and at last, the bonnet she had brought from Belgium had lost the semblance of a bonnet, and her solitary pair of walking shoes were found to be full of holes. Her two faithful disciples consulted together what should be done in this emergency. They ventured at last to put a new pair of shoes in her room, but no sooner had she cast her eyes on them, than she exclaimed

how good God was to send her just what she wanted for a particular old woman, to whom the shoes were immediately conveyed. This mortifying failure of their first experiment a little discouraged them, and it was some time before they ventured on taking any steps for amending the condition of her bonnet. At last, however, with some hesitation, they contrived to produce a bonnet which one of them had made, and entreated her only once to try it on. She consented to do so, and to their extreme joy, the comfort which it afforded to her sensitive head was so great that she agreed to wear it, a result which they regarded in the light of a great victory.

She was in the habit of making little collections among the people for various pious objects, and also begged among her friends for means to relieve cases of distress. Thus, with Mrs. Amherst's assistance, she obtained a set of linen for lying-in women, which was lent to the most needy, and became the origin of a useful institution. Moreover, she found means to interest one of the medical men of the town in her charities, who, though a Protestant, was always ready to give gratuitous attendance to any of her sick people. She also received generous assistance from the Carpue family with whom she now for the first time became acquainted. It consisted of an aged retired priest, who held the rank of canon in the Cathedral of Arras, and who, with his two maiden sisters, resided in the extern quarters of the Benedictine convent of Princethorpe. Of the two sisters, one was blind, the other suffered constitutionally from distressing scruples. Shy and sensitive by disposition, they lived in great retirement, and Sister Margaret became their greatest comforter. Even in Belgium she had enjoyed the reputation of extraordinary skill in the relief of scrupulous consciences, and her advice was eagerly sought by her new friends. Miss Carpue often drove over to Coventry to visit and consult with her, and all three made her the vehicle of their charities in that

place. Mr. Carpue also had great confidence in her, and made it a particular request, that whenever his last hour approached she would be near him and watch him to the end ; as in fact she did when he was taken with his last illness, after the settlement of her community at Clifton.

She occasionally visited Princethorpe, and once, having gone over to attend the Corpus Christi Procession, she made so eloquent an appeal to the Community on behalf of her poor children at Coventry that all were struck by it ; and the late Rev. Mother Mary Agnes remarked, that she was sure " Sister Margaret would some day work wonders." This little incident is recalled by one, then a pupil in the convent, who on that day made her first acquaintance with Sister Margaret, and never lost the sentiment of veneration which she then conceived for her. Her influence, indeed, was felt by all who came in contact with her, and a story is told of the success of one of her begging appeals, which will perhaps remind the reader of a somewhat similar passage in the life of St. Catherine of Siena, though, in the present instance, the contribution was less ruthlessly demanded than in the case of our holy Mother. One day, after leaving the apartments of the Carpues, she observed that their servant at the turn was wearing a very good dress, which seemed to her the very thing she wanted for a poor woman in Coventry. She therefore addressed the maid as follows : " You have good wages, and I daresay have three or four other gowns up-stairs quite as good as that you have on, which I want very badly for a poor woman who has none ; so go up-stairs and change it, and bring it down to me." The maid, quite delighted, complied at once with her request, and Sister Margaret returned to Coventry in possession of the gown.

In addition to her other employments, she was sacristan, and kept everything about the church in excellent order. She possessed great skill in adorning the altar, and as one of her early companions remarked, " could make anything

look beautiful out of nothing." The materials at her command were but scanty. When first she came to Coventry the chapel was very imperfectly furnished with requisite linen and vestments. No lamp was burnt before the tabernacle—a circumstance arising from prudence rather than from neglect. This mark of devotion was still but rarely permitted in England, for Catholics felt reluctant to indicate the presence of the Blessed Sacrament to curious eyes, through fear of sacrilege. When Mrs. Amherst applied for leave to burn a lamp in her domestic chapel, Bishop Walsh felt himself obliged to refuse her this permission. But, accustomed as she was to the usages of a Catholic country, this omission struck Sister Margaret as a painful want of respect. On Rosary Sunday, 1842, she obtained leave to put a small cut-glass lamp before the tabernacle, and herself bought the first pint of oil for it, praying, as she lighted it, that it might never be suffered to go out. The sight of the lamp seemed at once to raise the faith of the people in the Eucharistic Presence. Some of them wept with joy on beholding it, and gladly brought their weekly pence towards its support; so that Sister Margaret's prayer was fulfilled, and the light she had been the first to kindle was never afterwards extinguished.

The desolation and poverty of God's sanctuary was doubly felt by her after having been so long accustomed to the magnificent Belgian churches. It was a positive anguish to her when, on the first occasion after her arrival, she beheld the old housekeeper preparing the altar for Benediction, and placing out the brass candlesticks used in the house and kitchen; and she at once wrote to her friend, Miss Eyre, of Bruges, who furnished her with the means of procuring more suitable altar furniture. Benediction, however, was not at that time often given, and Sister Margaret often went alone before the Blessed Sacrament, and, weeping to see her Lord thus solitary and unhonoured, she would sing through by herself, in the empty chapel, the

whole Benediction service—a touching act of reparation such as we have already seen another devout worshipper of the Most Holy Eucharist longing to see discharged in the neglected sanctuaries of England. Another story is told, which belongs, however, to rather a later period. After the building of the new church at Coventry had been completed, the members of the choir thought proper one Sunday to take offence at something, and refused to sing. Sister Margaret, indignant beyond measure at the disrespect thus offered to God, sang through the whole Benediction service alone, at the full pitch of her rich and powerful voice, in the resolve to make some amends in her single person for the shortcomings of the rest.

Even on her first arrival at Coventry, during Dr. Ullathorne's visit to Rome, Sister Margaret had taken some steps for improving the condition of the altar furniture, as appears from letters written to Mrs. Amherst, who liberally supplied her wants. Her notions on the subject of church decoration, however, were not so magnificent as they afterwards became, and she contented herself with something very far short of the highest Gothic standard. She often related the pleasure she took in the construction of a certain antependium of blue glazed calico, covered with muslin, with which the beholders were amply satisfied, and which was thought rather a splendid affair. Her ideas of ecclesiastical art had been entirely formed on the Belgian model, and were only gradually brought to the juster standard which Pugin revived in England. She stoutly defended all Flemish fashions as long as she could, but on occasion of her last visit to Belgium in 1865, she acknowledged on her return that either their practice or her taste had undergone a change.

It is probable, however, that the calico antependium was intended, not for the church, but for her schoolroom altar. Our readers will not have forgotten the image of Our Lady, already more than once mentioned. It need hardly be

said, that this image had been brought to England by Sister Margaret, and found an honoured place in her poor room, though she did not immediately venture on displaying it before the eyes of others. But one day previously to Dr. Ullathorne's departure to Rome it was produced in the parlour, and somewhat critically examined by him and Mr. Charles Hansom, the architect, then a member of the Coventry congregation. Its various parts were brought out separately, the figure of Our Lady, that of the Holy Child, the silver crown and sceptre. The whole had certainly nothing about it to recommend it in an artistic point of view, and the young architect pronounced it "rude," which made Sister Margaret very indignant. He made amends for this offence by designing a handsome mahogany triptych for its reception; but Dr. Ullathorne, before leaving England, thought it wise to warn her against publicly exhibiting the image. English Catholics were still but little familiar with the use of holy images, and their more measured manifestation of devotion to Our Lady contrasted with the Flemish practice in a manner which was a constant source of trouble to Sister Margaret, as she afterwards described with her customary *naïveté*. Speaking one day, during her last illness, of her favourite devotion, she exclaimed, "How many passions I have been in about the Blessed Virgin! I hope she will rub them all off! The Bishop used to say to Mr. Clarkson, that he really did not know what to do with me about her. But I could not help it. *Anything that touched her seemed to stick me through.*" She was somewhat consoled by receiving permission to distribute some miraculous medals, with due circumspection, and used to say, that every person who received one of those medals was afterwards converted. In time the triptych, with Our Lady in it, was placed on an altar table in the schoolroom, and after the night-school was over the Rosary was recited before it. The young women attending the night school sang some hymns and

the Litany of Loretto; and to these devotions, designed exclusively for the profit of her own scholars, Sister Margaret sometimes added a short spiritual lecture from Challoner or some other pious book.

It must be observed, that the Rosary was quite in disuse at this time among the Catholics of Coventry, and even Sister Margaret's immediate companions thought it a childish sort of devotion, in which they joined chiefly to please her. But the Roses of Mary are never planted without attracting, by their fragrance, the hearts of the faithful. Intended, at first, only for the scholars of the night-school, these pious meetings soon drew a larger attendance. Many Protestants even came, out of curiosity, as they said, to hear Sister Margaret preach, though her preaching consisted only in prayer, singing, and spiritual reading. The school-altar, with its handsome triptych and other adornments, was greatly admired, and its fame spread far and near. Some of the pupils at Princethorpe were accustomed to send artificial flowers of their own making for Sister Margaret's Blessed Lady, and at length, when the month of May drew near, she resolved to venture on the purchase of some branch-candlesticks. When the candlesticks arrived, she was terrified to find that their cost amounted to £8. She sometimes took occasion of the schoolroom meetings to appeal to the liberality of those present in behalf of some pious or charitable object, and her appeals, made in very plain and simple terms, were always generously responded to. On this occasion, she turned round to the people, when the Rosary was over, and said, "I have gone in debt £8 for the Blessed Virgin, and I am afraid to tell the Doctor; you must help me out of it." Immediately there were cries of "Here is a shilling, Sister Margaret!" and "Here is sixpence!" and by the end of the month the whole sum was paid. She delighted in making the most of her decorations. One afternoon having assisted her in preparing the schoolroom for the

evening Rosary, her friend, Miss Goode, was astonished to see her, after surveying the altar with simple glee, take hold of her dress in both hands, and execute a little dance before Our Lady. "What! do you *dance*, Sister Margaret?" she exclaimed. Sister Margaret was a little abashed at her unusual manifestation of devotion having been observed, and explained it by saying that "she only danced before her Mother." Though this was the only occasion when she was ever known to put her wishes into execution, she often expressed her love of Our Lady by saying she should like to dance before her; words which reminded her hearers of the act recorded of the Royal Psalmist, to the character of whose devotion her own bore so remarkable a resemblance.

The schoolroom Rosary evenings had many important results, and the devotion begun at Coventry was taken up at other missions. The Protestants, who came at first out of curiosity, were often induced by their Catholic friends to stay and talk with Sister Margaret, and these interviews led in many cases to conversions. It is impossible to overstate the power she possessed in speaking directly to the soul, and awakening within it the dormant instincts of faith. There was a Protestant lady at that time residing in Coventry, named Mrs. Merridew, who often came to the Catholic church, to attend the lectures delivered by Dr. Ullathorne, with whom she frequently spoke on the subject of religion. But the interest which she took in the controversy was wholly intellectual, and, desirous of rousing her to a more spiritual sense of the great truths in question, he one day said to her, "I wish, instead of holding these discussions with me, you could go and talk with Sister Margaret; there you will see the Catholic faith in action; she will give you the religion of the soul, and nothing else." She followed his advice, and returned from the interview powerfully impressed. "Sister Margaret," she said, "is a wonderful woman; she sees invisible things more clearly

than I see visible ones." This lady died some years later, having never, unhappily, received the gift of faith; but it passed to one, who, to all outward seeming, was far less likely to accept it, her confidential servant, Dorcas King, afterwards Sister M. Bernard, a Dissenter of strict manners and very rigid ideas. The report which she heard from her mistress of the interview above mentioned, induced her to go to one of the school-room meetings, and having been persuaded by a friend to introduce herself to Sister Margaret, the latter had no sooner fixed her eyes on her than she exclaimed, "Why, you will be a Catholic and a nun!" She laughed in unbelief, but in due time the prophecy was fulfilled. She became a Catholic, and afterwards joined the community at Clifton, where she died, a professed religious, in 1851.

Meanwhile Dr. Ullathorne had begun to form plans for the rebuilding of his chapel, the ruinous state of which was beyond the possibility of repair. It was his wish, moreover, that the new church should be raised after a better plan than the old one, and that an attempt should be made to raise a really solid and religious structure. It was first requisite to collect funds, and for this purpose he undertook several journeys into different parts of England. Collections were likewise set on foot among the Coventry congregation, the people generously contributing from their slender means. Several of the young women offered themselves as weekly collectors, and among these were the two faithful assistants of Sister Margaret already named, and a third, whose zeal in the good cause if possible outstripped theirs, and of whom it was said that she would walk a couple of miles to add a penny to her store. These three generous workers joined the Community later on, as Sister M. Rose Goode, Sister M. Osburga Gittens, and Sister M. Gertrude Roby. The Rosary evenings in the schoolroom were found to be useful opportunities for bringing the collectors together, and they were now made

to assume a more important character. Every Monday evening, after the devotions had been recited, Dr. Ullathorne came to the schoolroom, and gave those present a familiar lecture on some subject of interest. After this the collectors paid in their weekly collections, and then was the moment of triumph for the one who brought the largest contribution to the common fund. Besides the considerable sums that were thus raised, these weekly conferences diffused an excellent spirit among the congregation. The instructions which they received embraced a very wide range and were of an unusually solid and elevated kind. The ceremonies and ritual of the Church were explained in a manner suited to their capacity. Courses were given on whole books of Scripture, and other more popular subjects were likewise treated. The consequence was, that not only did the Catholics become thoroughly instructed in their faith,but that a tide of conversions set in from Protestantism. The number of converts received in one year was at the rate of one a day, and it used to be said that there was not a street without its convert. The number of communicants likewise largely increased, and the devotion of the congregation became remarked by strangers. Mother Margaret always attributed the success of the work at Coventry to the solid method pursued by the clergy in the instruction of the people. She refers to this subject in one of her later letters, when, after pointing out the evil arising from indiscreetly pressing too much at a time on minds not prepared to receive it, she continues, " We must not begin with the people at the wrong end, but teach them first to know God, and then to love Him, and to keep the commandments of God and the Church. When all this is well learnt, it is time to give them a multiplicity of devotions. It was so we did at Coventry, where we were two years saying the Rosary before the Confraternity was established. The works of God are not done in a hurry.

Let us teach the people to be good Christians, and all the rest will come." In particular, her experience of the good effected by the instruction of the people in the Church ceremonies, made her always solicitous in urging this point on those of her community who were engaged in teaching. She recalled the interest with which the Coventry congregation listened to some familiar explanation on these subjects from the lips of their pastor, and the practical effects which often ensued. One Holy Thursday, after a beautiful instruction had been delivered on devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and its teaching enforced by an unusually careful adornment of the Sepulchre, the devotion exhibited by the people was altogether extraordinary. They watched before the Sepulchre with unwearied ardour, and one poor man, who kept a rag shop in the town, remained before it the entire night, standing all the time, without changing his position. Sister Margaret watched him with surprise, and afterwards declared that he seemed like one in ecstasy.

On this occasion, as at other times, the duty of preparing the Sepulchre fell to her. It was one in which she displayed great taste, and it inspired her with peculiar happiness. One of her early companions, describing her skill in making very poor materials produce a very beautiful effect, adds the remark, that "our Mother always cried on these great feasts, because they were so soon over." She had been used to the long devotions of the Belgian "high-days," and it was a pain to her to think how short a time the English people spared out of their day to God.

None took a warmer interest in the work that was going on at Coventry than the Dominican Fathers, whose headquarters were then fixed at St. Peter's Priory, Hinckley, the neighbouring missions of Leicester and Nuneaton being likewise under their care. They were then few in number, and all of those whose names were most closely associated with this period of Mother Margaret's life, are now,

like her, departed to their reward. Among these were Fathers Caestrycht, Whiteside, and Procter. The two first were taken away almost at the same time; the last survived to a much later period, and died fulfilling the duties of chaplain in one of Mother Margaret's last foundations, St. Marychurch. She often spoke with admiration of these venerable men. "Father Whiteside was a saint," she said, "though he did keep me kneeling two hours in the Confessional, trying to persuade me that I ought to go to Leicester. I suppose," she added, "that he wanted to see what I was made of." Others of the Fathers belonging to a younger generation were also familiar with all the Coventry doings. The old schoolroom and chapel, and all the life and devotion that centred there, made lasting impressions on the minds of many; and the Rev. Father Aylward, who was at that time missionary at Cotton, recalled pleasant memories of the days when Sister Margaret was devoting herself to the improvement of the young women of Coventry, and when, delighting in taking part in all that was going on, he would sometimes give his people an early afternoon service, and then "cart them off" to join in the processions and other devotions of their Coventry neighbours. The opening of so wide a field of labour, the ample present returns, and abundant promise for the future, and the sense of spiritual life that was being breathed into a people whose warmth of heart and simplicity of manners continue at this day to endear them to all who work among them—all combined to shed a glow over this period of Sister Margaret's life. It formed her *beau-ideal* of missionary labour, and in after years, when any place gave promise of good, she knew no higher praise to bestow on it than to say, that "it would prove a second Coventry." During all this time the simplicity of her domestic life remained unchanged. "She had her place in the small kitchen with the servant-girl," says Bishop Ullathorne; "but once a week or so she was in-

vited into my parlour for an hour's conversation, and it was always to me an hour of special edification. It was during these conversations that the idea of a religious Community originated. How often we discussed both the spiritual and material ways and means ! yet I do not think we had much fear of finding support, if we could only secure the right persons at the start."

These occasional conferences formed the only recreation of her life. " My chief work of guidance," continues the same writer, " consisted in endeavouring to restrain her from exhausting her great strength with her continual labours and mortifications. . . . I left her to make her own way in her own fashion. Her kindness and cheerfulness attracted many persons round her, whilst her dignity and force of character kept everything in its place. Never for a moment did I know her to exhibit weakness or selfishness. She did the commonest things, and, on occasion, rendered the most menial services in a way that was uncommon and increased your respect ; and yet it was a very simple way."

The task of collecting for the new church obliged Dr. Ullathorne to be frequently absent, and towards the end of April, 1843, he proceeded to Liverpool for the purpose of soliciting contributions. Before leaving Coventry he gave permission for the celebration, in the schoolroom, of the devotions of the month of May. This exercise was at that time but little known in England, though it had been already introduced in several places by Father Gentili and the other Rosminian Fathers. A letter from Sister Margaret, dated the 2nd of May, gives an account of the opening of these exercises, and contains an allusion to the *Convent* and *Hospital*, which, as we have seen, already found existence in her hopes :—

" St. Mary's, Coventry, *Month of May, 2nd.*

" My very dear and Reverend Father, —I was

more than pleased to receive your welcome letter, and grateful for your great condescension in bestowing some few of your valuable moments on one so much beneath you.

" Last evening we began the exercises of the month of May. I asked Mr. Gore to open the month, which he did, and addressed the Protestants present on devotion to our Blessed Lady. He told them not to take scandal at any exterior devotion paid to her by Catholics. We had as many people as on very full Sundays. Were you here I think the walls would fall down. What shall we not get from our Divine Mother ? Are we the first in England to perform this month publicly ? I hope you will be here to close this month of salvation, as I am sure it will be to many. Mary will not refuse us that which we so earnestly demand—the salvation of our country, and the means to advance God's greater glory, *the Convent, and the Hospital.* Everything goes on well, the school increasing every week. I had ninety-two most days last week, and to-day ninety-six. . . . I think of extending the performances for the month of May till Whitsuntide, with your approbation ; because then you will be here, and perhaps the children could make their First Communion on that day. Please to present my kind regards to your sister, and tell her she must not use the word ' respects ' to me—I am not worthy of it. . . . I see many defects in the spelling of this letter. Had I time I would have made use of the dictionary, but St. Teresa says (and I think you would say the same), that it would be pride, particularly to you, my very dear father, who I wish to see all my defects, that you may cure them. All your congregation desire to be remembered to you, also the committee. They have been hard at work for Mary's month."

In his next letter, dated May 6, Dr. Ullathorne refers to a recent attack of illness from which she had been

suffering, and enjoins her not to fast during the month of Mary, as seems to have been her ordinary custom. We will give a portion of her reply :—

COVENTRY, *May* 10.

"MY VERY DEAR AND REV. FATHER IN JESUS,— . . . I am quite well, and have asked my Divine Mother to keep me so during this month, if it be God's holy will. You would be gratified, were you here, to see the many persons who come each night, most of them Protestants. On Tuesday nights Mr. Gore has the same devotions in the church which we make use of in the schoolroom, with the addition of Benediction. . . . We first sing the Litany, then say the Rosary, after that a hymn of the Blessed Virgin, or the Hymn of Jesus, or *Come Holy Ghost ;* we vary the hymns each day. Then we read a chapter of *Think Well On't*, and the Month of Mary, with examples ; then we sing another little hymn, and say a Litany, and vary that also each day, and conclude with one of the Psalms of praise. It lasts about an hour and a quarter, and nearly all the persons present join in the singing. . . . I will do all you require of me in regard of fasting ; but I fear, when we listen too much to nature, it will become master of us. I am not aware that I ever felt any ill effect from any act of penance I ever practised ; but when I omit them, I have many reproaches of conscience. Since I have been in England I have been very remiss, and nature is very glad of any excuse to omit them. At the same time, I feel it is a great spiritual loss, and that interior penance will never exist without the exterior. I do not say this because I wish to practise it ; at present it is to me a real penance, and I have more disgust for such things than affection, and require to be urged to practise rather than omit. Do not let me go back in a spiritual life. I fear as yet you do not know me. I am full of pride and self-will, and like to have all my own way, therefore require to have a guide to

lead me by the way of self-renunciation and humility. I have been told by my last director, that God required of me great perfection. I feel the seed is sown; but fear I do not correspond to those very great graces I receive from God. I have always prayed that God would give me a director that would not allow anything to nature. I do think I am more negligent than ever; I have not read two hours since you left altogether, and I cannot bring my mind to meditate. It is partly want of time. I hope my occupations will make up for it. I make an offering of myself daily with Jesus Christ in the Mass, and beg of God to accept me as a sacrifice, entirely devoted to accomplish His holy will, and advance His greater glory; and in a particular manner I offer myself for the conversion of sinners. Is this sufficient? I scarce do anything more. I fear you will be tired with my long letter; but have patience with me, and make me a saint, and do not study my self-love. . . . I remain, my dear and respected Father, your affectionate (and who wishes to be obedient) child in Jesus, MARGARET.

"*P.S.*—I got up very early to write this."

The foundation-stone of the new church was laid on the 29th of May, 1843, by the Very Reverend Father Luke Barber, President-General of the Congregation of English Benedictines; Mr. Charles Hansom being the architect. The parchment scroll enclosed in the lower stone records the fact that the Catholic congregation of Coventry numbered at that time one thousand souls, the population of the town being reckoned at 30,000. In those days, when the study of ecclesiastical architecture was only beginning to revive, the building attracted during its progress a considerable amount of interest. It consists of a nave, and two aisles, and a deep chancel; the former in the lancet, the latter in the early decorated, style of architecture. The aisles terminate, in their eastern extremities, in chapels,

verally dedicated to Our Lady and St. Benedict, the hapel of St. Benedict being separated from the chancel by me finely-executed stone arches. The windows of the ancel and of both chapels are filled with stained glass ; at in St. Benedict's Chapel containing figures of St. enedict, St. Scholastica, and St. Osburg, the last-named aint being one of the patron saints of Coventry, of which ty she is said to have been a native. Smaller medallions nd sacred emblems are introduced in all the windows of e nave, being offerings from different members of the ongregation. Most of them were put in by the young omen who had gathered round Sister Margaret ; and the edallion of Our Lady of Dolours, in a window near the Lady Chapel, was placed there by them as an offering in er name. The erection of this building, so devotional in s general character, and so far superior in point of art to ost of the Catholic churches which had yet been at-empted, was not completed without difficulties. Gothic rchitects, indeed, existed ; but they could not everywhere ommand a trained and experienced body of artisans apable of carrying out their plans. The priest and his rchitect, therefore, had to teach their own workmen, and o good carver could be procured. There was a young ad, however, the son of a farm-labourer, who showed signs f talent, and to him they furnished designs. Some casts ere procured, used by the workmen employed on the estoration of York Minster, and these were tolerably well mitated by this amateur artist, whose original attempts ere less successful. In short, every detail was studied ith patient care, and a thoughtful application of limited esources.

Before commencing the work, Dr. Ullathorne, accom-anied by Mr. Hansom, set out on a tour through Belgium nd Germany, with the double object of soliciting alms, nd of studying some of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of religious rt in those countries. Letters from Sister Margaret to

M. Versavel, the Abbé Capron, and her excellent friends Mr. Charles Eyre and his sister, then residents in Bruges secured the travellers a warm reception in that city, where every one was glad to receive tidings of "Margarita." M Capron talked of paying a visit to Coventry, Mr. Eyre was delighted to assist a work in which she was interested, and gave introductions to several English families. He promised, on the part of himself and his sister, to make over to Dr. Ullathorne some York insurance shares, which nominally yielded the annual sum of £12, and were supposed to be convertible into about £300; though, as will presently be seen, they eventually realised a much higher sum. A passage from Bishop Ullathorne's MS. notes has already been quoted, showing the warm affection with which persons of all classes spoke of Sister Margaret and her charitable labours in their city. "It is observable," he adds, "that when people spoke of her, it was not so much in common terms of eulogy, as of wondering admiration. Stranger as I was in the quaint old city, I found myself the object of wide-spread attention so soon as it was known that Margaret resided with me."

On returning to England, Dr. Ullathorne took the requisite measures for securing the sale of the insurance shares. For some time past they had paid little interest, and it was hardly hoped that they would fetch the sum which had been named. Many prayers were offered by the associates of the Rosary for the good success of the transaction, and to the surprise of everyone, before the day of sale the shares rose in value, and were actually sold for £700. Dr. Ullathorne immediately wrote to acquaint Mr. Eyre with this unexpected result, and to assure him that he would not hold him bound to a gift which had proved worth more than double its supposed value. But though Mr. Eyre was astonished at the intelligence, he generously declined receiving any part of the proceeds of sale, and the whole sum was contributed to the building, the remaining fund

being obtained from the subscriptions of the congregation, from collections in different parts of England, and from the resources of the Benedictine province.

In the February of 1844, Sister Margaret herself paid a short visit to Bruges, in the course of which she obtained means for the purchase of a ciborium, worth about £12 of English money. She collected it from house to house suffering much in the weary walks. The ciborium was bought in Bruges, and was afterwards recast at Birmingham. It was exhibited at one of the schoolroom conferences, and elicited one of those familiar instructions which created so lively an interest among their hearers.

In order not to interrupt our narrative of the commencement of the religious foundation, which will occupy the following chapter, we will anticipate the course of events, and bring together in a few words all that concerns the completion of the church and presbytery. The nave of the church was opened for divine service on the 10th of August, 1844, on which occasion the building was blessed by Bishop Wiseman, Coadjutor of the Midland District, who likewise preached. The chancel was not finished until the year following, and memorable was the day when the temporary partition that filled the chancel arch was taken down, and the people beheld, as if by magic, the beautiful chancel opened to their view. The consecration took place on the 9th of September, 1845, Bishop Wiseman and eight other bishops assisting at the ceremony.

The work thus happily completed, like most other good works, found some to cavil at it, and murmurers were found who expressed their wonder why Dr. Ullathorne should have thought of building so fine a church for a congregation in which "there was not a respectable person." This observation was overheard by Sister Margaret, and replied to in characteristic language. "Coventry Church," she said, "has been built, not for man, but God, and *He is always respectable.*"

As Dr. Ullathorne's plans included the rebuilding of the priest's house, he resolved, with the approbation of the Benedictine Superiors, that the new presbytery should be arranged in such a manner as to be available for the purposes of a small missionary priory. The proposal was warmly seconded by the authorities of the Order, and a substantial building was erected, communicating through the sacristy with the church, and containing accommodation for five or six religious. Whilst this was in progress, Dr. Ullathorne took up his residence in a house in Spon Street, and here, as we shall see, was laid the first germ of Mother Margaret's Community.

CHAPTER IV

1845

IT will have been seen, from the letters quoted in the last chapter, that the idea of some kind of religious foundation had already suggested itself to the mind both of Mother Margaret and her director. The excellent effects of her labours among the poor, and the rapid increase of the work itself, very early gave birth in Dr. Ullathorne's mind to the idea of founding a small religious community devoted to works of active charity. The materials requisite for forming such a community seemed to be gathering under his eyes in the persons of Mother Margaret and those faithful companions into whom she was gradually infusing much of her own spirit. On the other hand, Mother Margaret herself had never laid aside her longing desire to embrace a strictly religious life. This desire, coupled with her firm resolve never to join any other order than that to which she was already associated, led her more than once to solicit permission from her director to try her vocation in the Dominican Convent of the Second Order, then established at Atherstone. Bishop Walsh, who always continued to take a kind interest in her, and who was aware of her wishes and attractions, kindly offered to procure her gratuitous admission into any of the convents of his diocese, and specially recommended her to join the Sisters of Mercy. "It is impossible, my lord," was her reply; "I am a Dominican." "But," urged the Bishop,

" you are alone." " If I live and die alone," she replied, " I never can be anything but a Dominican."

The idea of a commencement of some sort at Coventry had evidently been under consideration before the April of 1843, and in the summer of that year it appears to have taken a definite shape and purpose. A young person, Miss Gittens, afterwards Sister M. Osburga, a stranger to Coventry, who was desirous of entering religion, having sought Dr. Ullathorne's advice, and heard what was in contemplation, decided at once on placing herself and her means at his disposal. The plan was being slowly matured by prayer and reflection until the moment should arrive for putting it into execution; and the following letter will show what were the views and sentiments of Mother Margaret herself on this important subject :—

" My very dear and Reverend Father,—There are several things I wish to say to you, and I have often endeavoured to begin the subject, but could not find words to express myself as I wished. As the spiritual wants of this place increase, I feel the necessity of others being employed for the service of the poor afflicted members of Jesus Christ, and feel at the same time that I am in no way capable of conducting or instructing any person who might wish to assist in this holy employment. I have many reasons which make me fear having a companion. 1st, My character has never been formed ; 2nd, I consider I stand as much in need of a noviciate as any person ; 3rd, I have never been taught to practise virtue, and therefore know not how to teach it to others ; 4th, I should not like to reprove or correct another, having such a dislike to receive either myself. I have also a particular dislike to be placed so that my actions are watched by others, for I do not feel that I live in a manner to serve for another to follow, nor according to the ideas that I myself form of a

religious life. I should not like to see a young person who was anxious for her perfection placed exactly as I am. God has been merciful to me, in giving me a greater share of spirits than usually fall to women; and that again makes me unfit to have any command over others. I feel seldom weary in the service of God, and might urge others too far who have not the same excitement. I have often thought that perhaps you might apply for a religious or two who would be more capable, and could conduct us with a truly religious spirit. I feel lately a great fear on many subjects, and think I am neither fit to be in nor out of a convent, but that God has destined me to do what I can among the most wretched of His creatures. I hope you will not be displeased at my taking this means of expressing my sentiments to you. You have always told me to be candid with you, and tell you all I felt. Perhaps you will be able to see by this what I am fit for. I could say much more on this subject, but I think I have said sufficient for you to understand me. I remain, with great respect, your truly affectionate child in Jesus,

MARGARET."

The plan suggested with so much humility in this letter, namely, that the formation and government of the proposed community should be placed in the hands of some other religious, was never for a moment entertained. Yet it was felt that the young foundation would need the support and guidance of one already trained in religious life, and it was therefore decided to begin on a very humble scale, and to receive the first postulants under Dr. Ullathorne's own roof, with the view of transferring them at a future time to a house of their own in another part of the town.

It cannot be denied, that such a plan was somewhat unusual; but it seems to have been one of those cases in which ordinary laws have been providentially overruled; nor was the project carried into execution without the full

concurrence, both of the Benedictine and Dominican authorities. It was with the consent of the Benedictine Provincial that, when the Sisters were first received into the priest's house, the second priest employed on the mission lodged elsewhere, an arrangement only intended to continue until the community should be fairly formed, and able to establish itself in a separate residence. For the rest, the whole scheme may at first be said to have been tentative. It was in no way foreseen how the work would develop, nor was it at once definitely settled under what rule its members should be trained. Mother Margaret, indeed, never for a moment swerved from her fixed resolve, to adopt no rule but that of St. Dominic ; her attachment to her Order was a part of her spiritual life, and she could not tolerate the thought of ranging herself under any other religious banner. But the plan presented difficulties, and, meanwhile, the character of the Institute, and the objects to be embraced by it, afforded matter for grave deliberation.

One great object of solicitude was, how to bring the work to act on the young factory women of Coventry. A project was for a time under consideration, in some respects similar to that which has since been carried out by the Franciscan Tertiaries, of having looms, and allowing some of the more respectable young women to work, and even to lodge, in the establishment, under the care of the religious, earning their bread by their own labour. One of the postulants, Miss Goode, who had first offered herself to Mother Margaret, was herself a most skilful workwoman, and had formerly kept two looms at work in her own house, employing other young women under her. With a view of making such an experiment as has been described, she did not immediately dispose of her looms after joining the community, but let them out, until at length this part of the scheme was abandoned.

It has been said that Mother Margaret's strong wish of

placing her community under the rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic presented some difficulties. The Dominican Tertiaries were not at that time known in England, and even the English Fathers were not then familiar with their rule. The only convent of Dominicanesses existing in this country was that at Atherstone,[1] the members of which followed the Constitutions of the Second Order, and were strictly enclosed. It was partly with the view of gathering all requisite information on the subject that, in February 1844, Mother Margaret undertook that journey to Belgium which has been mentioned in the last chapter. Two of the intended postulants, both of them members of the Coventry congregation, were entrusted, during her absence, with the care of the sick and the school. Her absence did not exceed three weeks, during which time she collected all the particulars which she could obtain relative to the rule of the Third Order, and other active communities. In a letter addressed to her by Dr. Ullathorne, dated February 5, he advises her to obtain "the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity,"[2] and whatever else seems likely to be useful. He adds, that if the difficulties in the way of aggregating them to the Dominican Order should prove insuperable, the Bishop would gladly let them take their own course, and would not interfere if they placed themselves under his protection.

Nothing, however, was further from Mother Margaret's desire than to become a *foundress*, in the strict sense of that word. It was a title she ever repudiated. "There is nothing of mine in it," she would say, when any one complimented her on the success of her work, or addressed her as

[1] Since removed to Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight.

[2] The Sisters of Charity here spoken of were not those of St. Vincent of Paul, but belonged to another institute, founded not long before by a Canon of Utrecht. Mother Margaret was well acquainted with their rule, two points of which she desired from the first to carry out in her own foundations, namely, the combination of active works with an austere rule, and the union of several convents into a congregation with one noviciate house.

foundress of the Community; "our only founder is St. Dominic." The fact of her Community being, as to its Rule and Constitution, no new Institute, but an integral part of one of the ancient Orders of the Church, was the only thing about it in which she permitted herself to glory. So far from thinking that she would have gained anything in the way of honour had she originated a new Institute in the Church, she would, in that case, rather have felt herself sacrificing the true patent of her spiritual nobility—her affiliation to the family of St. Dominic and St. Catherine. Her opinion, therefore, remained unchanged, that the Community should be placed under the ancient and well-tried rule, that had already for six centuries trained so many generations of saints, and to which her own allegiance had so long been given. But here other questions arose. The Third Order proved to be capable of a great variety of developments, and admitted of almost every form of religious life. It was originally founded for seculars living in their own families, and associated to congregations governed by a certain religious rule, but not leading community life, and under this form it still flourishes in England and Ireland, as well as on the Continent. At various times, however, these secular Tertiaries have been gathered into regular religious communities taking the three essential vows of religion. Thus the companions of St. Catherine of Siena, after her death, embraced regular Community life; and from them the present Convent of St. Catherine of Siena in Rome traces its descent. The Convents of Blessed Emilia Bicchieri, Blessed Columba of Rieti, and Blessed Lucy of Narni, were all of the Third Order, as was also the famous Convent of Prato, to which St. Catherine de Ricci belonged. But even among these *conventual* Tertiaries there existed certain differences of rule and development. The Convent of Prato, though not enclosed, was exclusively contemplative; but in that founded by Blessed Columba, though the perpetual vows of poverty

chastity, and obedience were taken, active works of charity were embraced ; and one historian of the saint, Bolestra, informs us that she recommended her children never to bind themselves to enclosure, lest such an obligation should hinder them in the discharge of these charitable labours. Père Jean de St. Marie, in his preface to the " Lives of the Religious Women of the Order," reckons four distinct classes of Tertiaries, varying, in the strictness of their religious rule, from the secular Tertiary, living in the world, to the enclosed nun. Hence, there was evidently nothing new or unprecedented in the attempt to form a Community of Dominican Tertiaries, who, while embracing all the obligations of religious life, enclosure excepted, should devote themselves to the active works of charity. On this point, however, care was taken to procure the opinion of the English Dominican Fathers, and their advice was requested to decide the point, whether the whole plan should not be submitted to the General of the Order. Father Augustine Procter's reply to this suggestion is still preserved in a letter, dated August 29, wherein, after pointing out the manner in which he thinks the Sisters may prudently commence, he concludes by saying, that in his opinion the Provincial of the Order possesses sufficient authority for the purpose, without troubling the General. Another question which naturally presented itself regarded the government of the Community when formed. But this difficulty was definitively settled by the willingness expressed on the part of the Dominican Superiors to leave the entire direction of the rising Institute in the hands of him who had originated it. The necessary powers to that effect were conveyed to Dr. Ullathorne by the Provincial of the Order, and the Fathers gave their hearty support to every step that was taken. The consent of the Benedictine Superiors was likewise obtained, together with that of BishopWalsh, the Vicar-Apostolic of the Midland District ; and in his correspondence with Mother Margaret, still

absent in Belgium, Dr. Ullathorne thus acquaints her with the promising aspect of their affairs:—"I have received," he says, " a very kind letter from the President-General (of the Benedictines). He says, that as the plan does not involve any proximate, or even remote, expense to the Order, he will not for a moment withhold his support and countenance ; and he adds, '*Intende, prospere procede et regna*, and God's blessing attend your undertaking. I am happy to see Mr. Clarkson so cordially co-operate with you ; brother holpen by brother is a strong tower.' " Ten days later, Dr. Ullathorne again writes:—" Bishop Walsh enters cordially into the undertaking ; the Dominican Provincial offers no opposition ; in short, *we have everybody's countenance to begin with.*" [1]

Words of encouragement such as these were at that moment not a little needed by her to whom they were addressed. The providence of God invariably ordained, that before beginning any important undertaking, Mother Margaret should pass through a preparatory trial of discouragement and desolation. It was the discipline needed probably by her strong and ardent spirit, and effectually restrained any natural satisfaction which she might otherwise have taken in her work. In the present instance, her visit to Bruges had brought her many rebuffs and disappointments : her own letters have not been preserved, but from the replies of her director, we gather how bitterly these trials had searched her spirit, and how, at the very moment when the hopes of many years seemed on the point of being realised, her own heart was lying prostrate. " You must not mind," he says, " whether you bring anything back from Bruges or not ; if it so please God, it is well, if not, it is equally well. You will not in the end regret that your anticipations have been many of them disappointed. What is this, compared to the practical lesson of the inconstancy and uncertainty of all earthly

[1] MS. Correspondence, Feb. 5, Feb. 15.

things? In your desolateness, my dear sister, be not moved, fear not. It is a great school you have been put into at an important crisis of your life, that is, of your spiritual education for life. How strongly after this will you be always feelingly instructed in the importance of not resting anything upon the *where* or *with whom* we are in this life. You anticipated consolation, you have learnt instead a bitter lesson of detachment, or rather, our Heavenly Father is teaching it to you. Take courage; turn to your 'Following of Christ' when your trial presses; you can scarcely read anywhere without coming upon what you want. The way in which God is conducting those who are to begin this work, whilst it tries *them*, consoles *me* with great hope. I am only filled myself with dismay as to my own state."

He concludes with some intelligence which he well knew would go further to dispel her sadness than any words that touched on her own affairs. "The Bishop's Pastoral has been published, entirely on the duty of frequent Communion, and a scheme is on foot for beginning the Forty Hours' Adoration, so as to make it perpetual throughout England."

The cloud, indeed, must soon have passed away, when, on her return to Coventry, Mother Margaret found herself welcomed at the station by not a few of the congregation, whilst her two "postulants elect" awaited her at home to give an account of their respective charges. All had gone on admirably; the school and the sick had been well cared for, and there was much to say of a certain *protégé* of Mother Margaret's, who went by the name of "her old man," and who had made his First Communion during her absence with admirable fervour. On the 28th of March, 1844, the postulant before alluded to arrived in Coventry, and the four took up their residence in the house in Spon Street. One alone of their number possessed any independent means, and that was wholly insufficient for the

support of the community. Their only other resources were a small annual pension paid by the father of one of the postulants, the assistance of friends, and the aid afforded by their generous protector, Dr. Ullathorne, who placed his house and his purse at their disposal, and devoted himself with unsparing energy to their spiritual formation.

A small room in the house had been cleared and fitted up as a chapel, destined to be the first choir of the new Institute. Small and poor as it was, it had a devout appearance, with its plain wooden altar and tabernacle—the tabernacle-door painted blue and gold, with a figure of the Lamb bearing the Cross—white wooden candlesticks from Belgium, and above, a copy of Vandyke's Crucifixion, which now hangs in the refectory of St. Dominic's Convent, Stone. The office of Our Lady was daily recited by the Sisters, at first in English,until they had acquired greater fluency in the pronunciation of Latin. The Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the chapel, and Mass was said there every morning ; whilst on certain occasions permission was given for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The correspondence of the next two months affords indications that the Community was gradually assuming more and more of a religious shape and character. It takes notice of some of their early troubles, among which must be chronicled a certain temptation to laughter which beset them in choir, and drew on them some salutary penances. St. Catherine is continually set before them as the model on which they are to be formed, and the acquisition of a copy of her works is announced with devout exultation :—" St. Catherine's works are come," writes Dr. Ullathorne, from Downside, " and though dear, (£3, 3s. for four volumes), I shall always count them cheap. She always begins her letters,' In the name of Jesus Crucified and Sweet Mary ' ; and then goes on to say, ' I, Catherine, the servant and slave of the servants of Jesus, in whose Blood

vrite.' There is a little taste for your soul of the spirit St. Catherine. I think we must be silent, and let her ıch us, and I will interpret as well as I can." In the ne letter he refers to the encouragement he has received ›m the Superiors of the Benedictine Order in all his ıns, adding, " They will do anything for us here in their wer." Many are the injunctions which we find laid on e young postulants by their spiritual Father to observe e law of silence, and they are reminded that they will ver be nuns till they learn to understand its value. In ıother letter, dated April 24, he expresses a hope that ey keep choir regularly, and are particular about medita-›n and spiritual reading, and their conduct with externs. 'e learn also that the important subject of giving them e habit is already under consideration, and the proper rm and fashion of the habit is brought under discussion. It was not thought possible at once to assume the white ıbit of the Dominican Order. The active duties em-raced by the religious were doubly arduous at a time hen their numbers were few and their means very limited, ıd the poverty with which they had to struggle in their rst commencement made it essential for them to study :onomy even in the smallest details. It was therefore :ided to adopt a black habit for a time, beneath which as worn the white scapular, which is the special badge of ıe Dominican Order. The form of the veil and kerchief as procured from the Dominicanesses of Atherstone, and lopted, with some slight modifications, and the addition f a sort of cap which Mother Margaret had seen worn in elgium, but which was afterwards laid aside. Such were ıe exterior preparations, but others of more vital import-ıce yet remained to be made. A religious Community ›uld not begin in earnest without a rule. The rule known s that of the Third Order, having been drawn up for *:culars*, was not adapted to the use of *conventuals*; and ı all cases where Dominican Tertiaries had hitherto em-

braced a regular Community life, it had been found necessary to use the Constitutions drawn up for the nuns of the Second Order, with such modifications as were suggested by the circumstances of the case. The compilation of such Constitutions, adapted to the use of an unenclosed Community devoted to active works, was manifestly required for the complete organisation of the new Institute ; but it was an undertaking beyond their present strength to attempt, and prudence suggested the deferring such a step until the whole design had been matured and tested by time. All that could be done in the present emergency was to draw up regulations embodying the most essential laws and duties of religious life for the temporary guidance of the Sisters.

This was done by Mother Margaret herself, nor was she unqualified for such a task. Her long residence in Bruges, and her intimacy with many religious Communities, such as the Teresians, the Belgian Sisters of Charity, and the English Augustinians, had made her familiar with the general routine of conventual life. With the Dominican Constitutions she was still more closely acquainted. When in Belgium she had procured a copy of the " Constitutions of the First Order," in Latin, a French edition of the " Constitutions for the use of the Nuns of the Second Order," and another Flemish work[1] on the constitutions, containing copious and valuable annotations taken from the works of Blessed Humbert. At the time of her first admission into the Third Order she took every opportunity of studying the Constitutions, and not being very familiar at that time with either the French or Flemish languages, she persuaded a young friend to read them to her, translated into English, her friend being unable to comprehend the interest she showed in what seemed to her so very dry a

[1] " *Zede-puncten op den Reghel van den H. Augustinus, en de Constitutien der Nonnekens van den H. Dominicus.*" This book appears to have been given her by some of the Dominican Fathers of Ghent.

udy. These precious books continued to form a part of er Coventry library, and in those conferences in the riest's parlour, in which, as Dr. Ullathorne has informed s, the whole plan of the religious foundation was first nceived, she would produce her Latin copy of the rule, nd placing it in his hands, induce him to read and explain to her. She had thus acquired a very fair acquaintance ith the general tenor of the Dominican rule, and on oubtful points recourse was had to the advice of one of ne Belgian Fathers of the Order, with whom she had ecome acquainted during the time of her former attempt t a religious foundation at Bruges. This was Père B. C. . Moulaert, who rendered much valuable assistance to ne Community, both now and at a later period. He was imself the author of a "Manual for the Brothers and isters of the Third Order," published in 1845, in which e reprints the treatise of the Rev. Père J. B. Feuillet, nriched with many useful notes. In one of these he races the various developments of the Third Order already lluded to, and after speaking of the celebrated congrega- on founded in Italy by Sister Claudia of the Angels, the nembers of which devoted themselves to the education of ne poor, he adds, "we feel pleasure in announcing that nstitutions very similar to this have lately commenced, amely, in 1840 at Rotterdam, and in 1844 at Coventry, in England, which already promise great fruits." The little ocument, drawn up by Mother Margaret, and still pre- erved, in her own handwriting, bears the title, "Rules and Constitutions, or Customs for the present regulation of he Third Order of our Holy Father St. Dominic: under he special protection of the Ever-Blessed Virgin and St. Catherine of Siena." The expression used plainly shows hat these were intended only as provisional regulations, nd that the compilation of an authorised body of Consti- utions was contemplated at some future time. There ollow twenty-nine rules, in which are laid down the proper

time and manner of performing the various religious exercises of office, meditation, spiritual reading, examen of conscience, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. The rule of silence is drawn out with great precision, and other regulations have reference to the practice of obedience and holy poverty, the conduct to be observed in receiving reproof, the manner of holding chapter, the intercourse of the religious with externs, the modesty to be observed when going through the streets on their visits of charity, and the exact degree in which the rule is binding on their consciences. The whole is stamped with that character of penance which, as it was the virtue which had first attracted her to the Dominican Order, so was it also that which she desired to see practised by her children in its heroic degrees. Her simple and unstudied language rises into eloquence when she treats of this point, appealing to the precepts and example of our Holy Father, who by his prayers and penances converted innumerable sinners. "How necessary then," she continues, "is it for us, in this unhappy country, to do penance and subdue our nature, that thereby we may obtain the conversion of those souls who are daily and hourly going to perdition!"

Simple as were these rules, they sufficed for the immediate wants of the Community. But it remained to be determined in whose hands should be placed the religious training of the Sisters, and their instruction in the exercises of the novitiate. We have seen that Mother Margaret's first proposal of obtaining the assistance of other religious had been overruled by her director, who judged her quite capable of filling the office of Superioress to the Community, with such support as his own religious experience would enable him to afford. With the view of assisting her in the duties which she would have to discharge in training her companions, he placed in her hands a little book entitled, "Directions for the Mistress of Novices," by the Abbé Leguay. The study of this book suggested

many misgivings in her own mind as to her qualifications for such an office, which she expressed in the following letter :—

"*Friday Night.*

"My very dear Father in Jesus,—I have felt uneasy lately on account of the charge I fear you intend to lay on me : I mean the direction and instruction of others, a charge I feel quite unable to fulfil ; not that, if you command it, I shall refuse to submit, but when I give you my reasons I think you will find it necessary (for me) to go through a novitiate with the others. The book I am now reading—'Directions for the Mistress of Novices'—convinces me fully of the necessity of first practising that which you command to others, and the wisdom, learning, discretion, and firmness required for the well performing that duty, that science of all sciences, which is the salvation and perfection of souls. Now, as I have never gone through a novitiate, I cannot be competent to conduct others. It is true I had a year's probation before I entered the Third Order, but that was more to see if I could practise the duties it enjoins than any effort to overcome my passions. I may say I never had a guide till I came to you, but all I have done has been from the inspiration of God. Again, I scarce know myself, because I have always had perfect liberty to act as I pleased in all matters of devotion and penance. I do not remember ever to have performed one act of penance or humiliation imposed by another, and had it been imposed I fear I should never have submitted to it. How then can I impose them on others ? Much as I should see the necessity of correcting those who are called to so holy a state, I should not have resolution to do it, knowing I had never been corrected myself. I have made it a continual prayer to God that He would allow me to enter a novitiate, that by that means I might know myself ; and as He has, in His wonderful providence, placed me where it can be accomplished, I hope you will

not refuse to allow me to begin with the rest. I know it will be adding greatly to your labours, but God will assist you to fashion us according to His Divine will and His merciful designs over us. Many saints have not disdained to conduct women to perfection ; and in these days, when we are so much employed in the service of our neighbour, we need a guide with more understanding than we women generally possess. Perhaps in a few months after having been tried myself I might relieve you from the burthen, and at the end of the year let that person be chosen for Superior who has been the most fervent novice, or the most capable for that awful charge. You have always desired me to be open, and I find I can say much more by putting it to paper. I desire you should know and see into my interior as clear as the Almighty, but I cannot always express myself as I wish. I remain, my very dear Father in Jesus, your truly affectionate child, who desires to be obedient and humble, MARGARET."

Her wishes on this head were to a certain extent complied with. Though acting as Superior to the other sisters, it was agreed that she should share with them in all the instructions and other exercises of the novitiate, at which Dr. Ullathorne consented to preside. Nothing seemed now required save to obtain the formal permission of the Bishop for the clothing of the postulants, and this was accordingly solicited in the following letter :—

" ST. GREGORY'S, DOWNSIDE,
" *Saturday before Ascension*, 1844.

" MY DEAR LORD,—Having to return to Coventry from my laborious task of begging for the Church, on Trinity Sunday, in order to give the First Communion to upwards of forty children, I wished to take the same opportunity for the clothing in the habit of St. Dominic the three young persons who are now under the care of Sister Margaret.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to remind your Lordship that the Third Order implies no obligation to Community life, though Community life be contemplated and intended. Your Lordship has very kindly approved of my design of employing the Third Order of St. Dominic for the instruction and service of the people of Coventry. They have already for some time commenced their probation, and recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin in choir; but I did not think it prudent to proceed further till I had some written testimony of your Lordship's sanction and approval and for this I now most respectfully petition.

"I beg leave respectfully to add, that the Provincial of the Dominicans has given me full authority to associate members of the Third Order, according to their constitutions. I remain, your Lordship's respectful humble servant,

W. B. ULLATHORNE."

The Bishop's reply to this application is couched in the following terms:—

"ST. BENEDICT'S PRIORY, *May* 28, 1844.

"MY DEAR DR. ULLATHORNE,—You have my full approbation for the institution of the Third Order of St. Dominic at Coventry, and for clothing the three postulants alluded to in your letter. I remain, my dear Dr. Ullathorne, with great respect, your friend and faithful servant,

✠ THOMAS WALSH."

The formal authorisation of the Dominican Provincial was likewise obtained. "As you prefer a *written* to a *verbal* permission for receiving members to the Third Order," writes Father Nickolds, "I hereby confer on you, *quantum possum*, the requisite powers for receiving and governing the members of the said Third Order of St. Dominic in Coventry."[1] And whilst these steps were

[1] Letter from Father Nickolds to Dr. Ullathorne, Corpus Christi, 1844.

being taken to secure the canonical erection of the future edifice, the Sisters chosen by God's providence as its foundation stones were being instructed " to prepare themselves by greater regularity, more exact silence, a growing love of humiliation as the instrument of holiness, and more earnest as well as more interior prayer for that holy habit of religion which is the livery of the saints."[1] All made a spiritual retreat as an immediate preparation for their clothing, and at last, on the 11th of June 1844, being the Feast of St. Barnabas, they received the holy habit in their little chapel from the hands of Dr. Ullathorne. The Rev. Father Augustine Procter came over from Hinckley, to be present on the occasion, as representative of the Provincial, nor was anything omitted which could contribute to the solemnity of the impressive function. A letter, written nine years later by one of those present, recalls every incident of the eventful day : " the sermon, the Litany," (which for many years was sung to the same chant on similar occasions, and obtained the title of *the Clothing Litany*,) "the Doctor's ring, and the rebuke" administered by Mother Margaret to the youngest of the novices, who, as she thought, exhibited a little satisfaction at her worldly dress, and whom she pithily reminded " not to be thinking about those rags."

The life on which the newly-clothed religious now entered was one of no little labour and hardship. Founded in poverty, that true patent of religious nobility, they had to endure its reality, and not its name. Their food was of the plainest description,and not rendered more palatable by the skill of Sister M. Rose Goode, who presided in the kitchen. She was but a learner in the culinary art, and somewhat given to experiments. The experiments were not always very successful. Her first pudding was pronounced so hard, that it might have been tossed over St. Michael's Tower without being broken ; and having heard

[1] Correspondence, May 1844.

hat boiled nettles were a very fair substitute for spinach, he once presented the Community with this unusual delicacy, which might have been better relished had not the nettles been old and tough. Fish never appeared on their frugal table, so that on the abstinence-days prescribed by the rule, potatoes formed their principal article of food. Nor were their beds more luxurious than their fare. Sister M. Rose slept on an old door, and is said to have found the handle somewhat penitential. In the world all had been accustomed to a certain measure of comfort, yet the fervour with which they now embraced their hard rule of life, rendered even its austerities delightful to them. " How sweet everything tastes here ! " said one ; " yet what should I have thought of it in my father's house ! "

These generous dispositions were fostered by the direction under which they were trained. Two rules were given them in the beginning by their spiritual Father, who desired to form them in a truly heroic spirit :—they were to banish from their vocabulary the words "uncomfortable" and " impossible ; " and his precepts on this head were enforced by his example. Another of his maxims, which Mother Margaret often loved to recall, was, " First put in the spirit of Christ, and then the spirit of the rule on that." They were thoroughly exercised, moreover, in humility and mortification, and taught the value of labour as an instrument of sanctification. Nor must it be forgotten, that the principles thus laid down at the commencement of the Institute continued to be cherished by its founders at a time when it had assumed proportions far exceeding their early anticipations. Up to the latest hour of her life, Mother Margaret continued to regard menial labour in a Community as one of its most valuable spiritual elements. She never departed from the resolution which she formed from the first, of establishing but one grade in her Community, and of subjecting all, without exception, to the holy law of labour. " From the first foundation of her

congregation in England," writes Bishop Ullathorne, " we were both strongly of opinion that it would be much the best not to receive lay Sisters.[1] "

It need hardly be added, that far from being an innovation, this exclusion of lay Sisters was rather a return to the ancient model of religious life, which, in its earliest form, combined with the monarchical form of government, those much-abused ideas of equality and fraternity, in their strictest sense. And the result was, that, as was often remarked by Mother Margaret's own children, the interior aspect of her convents recalled to mind the description which our own St. Bede has left of those early Benedictine Communities, in which that same law of labour was enforced alike on the peasant and the prince, and in which the hand that one while might be illuminating a manuscript, was to be seen at another at work in the bakehouse, or giving fodder to the calves. This was the spirit in which the foundation of her Congregation was originally cast, and how little she swerved from it in the course of her after career may be gathered from a letter written to one of her very latest foundations, and which we shall quote in this place, as singularly illustrative of the constancy with which Mother Margaret adhered to the deep and broad principles on which her ideas of religious life were based.

"Ask our Lord,"she says, "during this Octave," (of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin,) "to make you true imitators of Jesus and Mary, interiorly and exteriorly. They led a humble, hidden, useful life ; and this is really a want in you. Ask our dear Lady to teach you, and she will be sure to do it. I know it by experience. When I did not know how to provide for the body, which must be provided for as well as the soul, she taught me. But then I put my own will to work, and did not think it ungenteel to use my hands, and eyes,and other senses that God had given me,

[1] Later on, however, when the Choral Recitation of the Divine Office was adopted, the introduction of the Lay Sisters became indispensable."

to do what He willed that all should do, 'Eat their bread in the sweat of their brow.' When the will is lazy, nothing can be learnt, but God will help us, and our good-will can do everything. Pray much during this Octave that our dear Lord will enable you to make use of all the faculties He has given you; then spiritualise them, and do as our Holy Mother did when cooking and baking for Jesus, Mary, and the Apostles. We cannot live without eating; surely, then, we ought to know the most needful work of all. We can sustain life without reading and writing, or any other work of the mind,—but eat we must, and to provide for it ought to be the zealous aim of all."

It was this "humble, hidden, useful life," of active labour spiritualised by prayer and a holy intention, on which the newly-clothed Sisters now entered. Their rule of life, however, was so arranged as to enable them, whilst carrying on the work of the school and the visiting the poor, to devote a considerable portion of each day to the exercises of the novitiate, and self-improvement. Mass was generally said in the chapel at Spon Street, which served also as their religious choir, after which, two went to the school, one remained at home and attended to the domestic duties, and the fourth visited the sick, taking as a companion one or other of the young women who still regarded themselves as in some sort Mother Margaret's companions. Among these was Maria Roby, sister to one of the novices, whose ardent attachment to Mother Margaret had led her to determine, in case of her removal from Coventry, on following her wherever she might go, earning her living by the work of her hands. Although the delicacy of her health had led to the preference being given to her elder sister in selecting the first three postulants, she herself earnestly desired to join the Community, and she afterwards received the habit of religon on her death-bed, under circumstances which will be hereafter related.

Various circumstances concurred to delay the profession

of the Sisters for six months after the year of probation had expired. Doubts were entertained as to the possibility of their making their vows before the age of forty years. This arose from the prohibition to that effect contained in the rule of the Third Order, which, as has before been said, was exclusively drawn up for *secular* Tertiaries, who are not allowed to bind themselves by vows of chastity before attaining that age.[1] The case of *conventual* Tertiaries was altogether different, but as it was not provided for by the letter of the rule, the question had to be thoroughly investigated. It was decided at last by reference to Père Moulaert, who was of opinion that Tertiaries formed into regular religious Communities were on this point bound only by the common law of the Church. His opinion proved to be supported by satisfactory authority, but until this uncertainty was definitively settled, the professions were necessarily delayed. During this year and a half the little Community struggled on through many difficulties, supported by their trust in the good providence of God, which never failed them. It was remarked, that from the day of the clothing the weekly offertory doubled in amount. Assistance was often received when most required, and from unexpected sources ; but among their most constant benefactresses at this time were the Dominicanesses of Atherstone, and Mother Margaret's early friend, Mrs. Amherst of Kenilworth. The following little incident is related by an eye-witness, Miss de Lys, who has been already named as making her first acquaintance with Mother Margaret in the cloisters of Princethorpe. " I remember, on one occasion," she writes, " driving from Kenilworth to Coventry with Mrs. Amherst to see Mother Margaret. Mrs. Amherst took with her a basket of provisions, knowing that at that time the Sisters were often in want of necessaries. The Sister who opened the door carried the basket in with her, and we followed. When we reached the sitting-room she put down the basket, saying, ' Here it is ! '

[1] This prohibition does not occur in the present rule for secular Tertiaries.

'Here is what?' asked Mrs. Amherst; and then they told us, that having nothing left in the house, they had just been praying for help, and their prayers were scarcely ended when the bell rang and the basket made its appearance."

Besides the trials of poverty, they were exposed to others from which no enterprise undertaken for God's glory is ever exempt. Critics abounded who treated with contempt an Institute so humble in its exterior; and "Sister Margaret and the *wenches* of Coventry," was the title by which the Community was commonly named. The whole thing was treated as an experiment,which some regarded as absurd,and others as audacious,but which both classes of objectors agreed in predicting could only end in failure. Even grosser calumnies were not spared; and one lady, who felt attracted to the Community, was deterred from joining it by hearing that there was not a single respectable person among the Sisters, and that Sister Margaret herself was nothing but an impostor. Opposition of this kind is perhaps the surest sign of God's blessing, and is precisely that which every religious founder has in turn been required to endure. Nor need it be regarded as at all extraordinary that the world at large failed to discern in the tiny mustard-seed the germ of the future tree; it is rather matter of wonder that some were to be found who were in no wise daunted by the outward aspect of poverty and littleness, but recognised in these humble commencements the hand and the work of God. And whatever may have been the hostile feelings of some, there were many who gave their testimony of sympathy and respect; while on the other hand, more than one of those who had sought to depreciate the Community, afterwards made generous reparation for their thoughtless words. In a pamphlet, published in 1846 by a recent convert, entitled, "The Fourfold Difficulty of Anglicanism," the labours of the Dominican Tertiaries of Coventry are referred to as an illustration of that mark of "sanctity" which distinguishes

the Catholic Church from every other religious body. The writer is comparing the efforts of individuals, and aggregated societies outside the pale of the Church, to the work accomplished within her communion by the religious orders. He had himself been struck by this contrast during a little tour he had made through England shortly after his conversion, in the course of which he visited Coventry. What he saw there appeared to him sufficiently remarkable to be cited among other examples of the heroic self-devotion to be witnessed in the Catholic Church. "You little know," he writes, "what is being wrought in our own day, and in this very country, by Catholic self-devotion. You have no idea how much has been done by a few nuns of the Third Order of St. Dominic in the town of Coventry,—by a religious sisterhood in Birmingham,—and by another, working in the very depths of London poverty." Simple as were the words, they bore a fruit beyond the writer's intention, and determined the vocation of Miss Maria Poole, who, as Mother Mary Imelda, was destined to become Mother Margaret's chief assistant in the consolidation of her future work and her successor in the government of the Congregation.

"On the whole," writes Bishop Ullathorne, "there was far more good than evil spoken of Mother Margaret and her undertaking; yet, sensitive as she was, less for herself than for those who had given themselves to her with such generous devotion, she could not but feel the pain of unfavourable reports. But she often repeated the words of Boudon, her great master in the spiritual life, that 'they who trouble themselves with what the world says will never do any good;' and the example of his life, as he stood in the storm abandoned by every living creature whilst the slander was on him, exclaiming, 'God alone!' was to her heart the type of Christian perfection." For the rest, the anecdotes that convey to us the contemptuous expressions of some critics often enough preserve the mem-

ory of kinder judgments more worthy of being recalled. On occasion of the opening of Coventry Church, in 1845, a priest, who had not visited the town for some years, came to attend the ceremony. He afterwards called on the father of one of the religious with whom he was acquainted, in company with two other persons. He spoke with delight of the progress of religion which he found in the place, of the beauty of the church, and the good that had already been effected by the little Community. One of those present began to speak of the Sisters in a depreciating tone, observing that "they were only a few poor girls." "Then," said the good priest, rising and taking off his cap, "the more honour and glory be to Almighty God, who chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong!" Eighteen years later, at the opening of St. Dominic's Church at Stone, on the 5th of February, 1863, it was remarked that the Epistle at the Mass (for the Feast of St. Agatha) contained those very words, so applicable to the humble beginnings of the Community.

It was during this time that Mother Margaret made her first acquaintance with Father Gentili, for whose missionary zeal and single-hearted devotion she always retained the warmest admiration. He first visited Coventry in 1844, for the purpose of preaching a sermon, and in the May of the year following he gave a public retreat to the congregation, which various causes combined to render a memorable one. The retreat had been fixed to take place at that particular time for a special reason. As most readers are aware, the city of Coventry is, every third year, made the scene of a procession known as the Godiva procession, which takes place within the Octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Disgraceful in its character, it is the modern substitute for those solemn processions of the Blessed Sacrament which were formerly celebrated with unusual solemnity in this city; and, according to local historians, the Godiva procession only dates back as far as the licen-

tious reign of Charles II. As practised at the time of which we speak, (for it is understood that some concession to propriety has been made of late years,) this exhibition tended so gravely to offend the public sense of decency, that in the year 1845 both Catholic and Protestant authorities attempted to take measures for counteracting the evil. The Protestant Bishop of Worcester addressed a letter on the subject to the city magistrates, and the Catholic priest invited Fathers Gentili and Furlong to begin a mission on the Feast of Corpus Christi, which fell that year on the 21st of May, and to continue it through the Octave. The result has been described in a letter from the Right Rev. Bishop Ullathorne, which appears in the " Life of Father Gentili." During the first three days the effort of the missioner proved fruitless ; very few persons attended the sermons, most being engaged in preparing their houses for the great gala-day ; but on Sunday, when the entire congregation was assembled, Father Gentili, on fire with zeal, and grieving at the attachment which they betrayed to their old customs, burst out in such a torrent of remonstrance and reproof, that tears and sobs were heard from every part of the church. He continued to preach three times a day during the remainder of the mission, and on the day of the procession, few, if any, of the Catholics attended it. He was particularly anxious to prevent the children of the congregation from witnessing so demoralising an exhibition. " He promised them," says Bishop Ullathorne, "that if they would remain with him he would give them more amusement than they would find in the streets. He kept his promise as well as they kept theirs ; for he interwove his instruction with such a chain of stories and dramatic pictures, told and represented in action, and in a style so winning, so amusing, so ludicrous, and so awful, by turns, as the subject shifted or its feelings changed, that older persons stood astonished, and the children were out of themselves—sometimes subdued into

e-struck silence, whilst at other times they broke out into apture of mirth. It was one of those hours that are ver forgotten throughout a long life."

During the remainder of the mission the church was wded, both by the Catholics of the congregation and by angers. Father Gentili reverted to the subject of the e procession, and reminded his hearers how, at his sug- stion, they had prayed for the rain to put an end to the seemly festivities, and how their prayers had been swered, as had indeed been the case. He then delivered e of his famous discourses on devotion to the Blessed rgin, and concluded with these words: "You have had e procession of your Lady, and now we will have a pro- ssion of Our Lady. The one shall expiate the other." ich a thing as a procession of Our Lady had not been tnessed in Coventry, or probably in England, since the erthrow of religion. Religious images of any kind were ill rare in this country, and such expressions of devotion ad not as yet been revived among us. But Father Gentili as not the man to be withheld by any feeling of timidity human respect, and he found a most hearty co-operator the person of Mother Margaret. With her assistance a er was prepared, and on it was fastened her own beloved nage of the Blessed Virgin, adorned with lights and owers. Everything was arranged, as far as possible, after ie model of the Belgian procession; and when all was ady, and Father Gentili beheld the spectacle which re- alled, in so lively a manner, the practices of a Catholic ountry, the image of the Virgin Mother, decked with its ala wreaths, and surrounded by young girls dressed in hite, he was like one in an ecstasy, and poured forth one f his inspired strains of eloquence on Our Lady, as "Cause f our joy." On that and the two successive evenings, a olemn and beautiful procession was made round the hurch; the crowds who came to see the sight, filled not nly the church and churchyard, but even the adjoining

streets. "So that as the procession advanced round the church, Dr. Gentili, in his surplice, had to conduct another kind of procession; for under his direction the people flowed on in one continuous stream from the south, through the north door, in order that these multitudes might have a glimpse of those ancient rites which had thus returned to triumph over their profane and modern substitute."

This event was one which Mother Margaret always recalled with peculiar delight. She loved to think that the image which she regarded with such devout veneration should have been the first to have been publicly carried in England since the Reformation; and among all the circumstances of her life, there were few on which she looked back with feelings of more unmixed happiness than this public act of reparation offered to the Mother of God.

By the close of the year 1845, all obstacles to the profession of the Sisters were removed, and December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, was fixed on for the ceremony. The formal consent of the Right Rev. Bishop Walsh was given in a letter, dated Nottingham, November 28, 1845; whilst to obtain that of the Dominican Provincial Dr. Ullathorne proceeded in person to Leicester, where he was then residing. The circumstances were recalled by Mother Margaret, twenty-two years later, as she lay on the sick-bed from which she never rose. "It was just such a day as this," she said, "bitterly cold, with frost and snow on the ground. The Doctor had to go to Father Nickolds at Leicester, to get his consent for the professions. He went on the outside of the stage coach, for there was no railway then, and came back frozen through. The three Sisters were put into retreat immediately on his return. As for me, that day, I walked on air. I was so delighted to find that all was settled, after the many difficulties we had had; and on the Immaculate Conception, too, the very day I had set my heart upon. I have just been reminding

ister Rose of it; how I had to decorate the church, and o to the Sisters, and then run away and cook the dinner, ll by myself, for they were in retreat. At five in the norning, I had to renew the vow of chastity I had taken efore, and to take the vows of poverty and obedience in ie hands of Father Aylward, and then to get the church eady for the ceremony." The Rev. Father Aylward on nis occasion acted as the representative of the Rev. Father 'rovincial; Father Augustine Procter, then Superior of St. 'eter's Priory, Hinckley, was also present, and the form f protestation read aloud by Mother Margaret is still pre-erved, written by his hand. All the Dominican Fathers, ndeed, showed a warm and fraternal interest in an event so mportant in the history of the newly-formed Community, nd rendered every assistance in their power. The cere-nonial for the profession was forwarded to them by Father Aylward a few days previously, in order that the Sisters night study the rubrics and answers beforehand; this, as well as the form of protestation, having been taken, with a few immaterial alterations, from those used by the Dominicanesses of Atherstone. But as, according to the custom of the Order, the novices were to make their vows in he hands of their Superioress, who on that occasion repre-sents the Master-General of the Order, it was necessary that she herself, before receiving the vows of the Sisters, should first make her own profession to the Master-General, represented by the Provincial, or his delegate. The par-icular form in which this was done bore reference to the fact of her being already professed in the Third Order, and bound by a perpetual vow of chastity. The following was the form of protestation:—

"JESUS, MARY, DOMINIC, CATHERINE.

"I, Sister Margaret Hallahan, do declare that I have entered the Holy Third Order of St. Dominic, out of no violence, compulsion, or fear, but, as I trust, by the instinct

of the Holy Ghost, and that I will persevere therein by the grace of Almighty God until death.—In witness whereof, I have hereto signed my name this 8th day of December, 1845.

MARGARET MARY HALLAHAN, Coventry.

Witness, W. B. ULLATHORNE."

The above is entered in the profession-book in Father Procter's handwriting: then follows the formula of the vows, written throughout by Mother Margaret's own hand.

"To the honour of Almighty God, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Dominic, and all the Saints.

"I, Sister Margaret Mary Hallahan renew my profession, and promise obedience, obliging myself at the same time to the three simple and perpetual vows of Obedience, Chastity, and Poverty, to Almighty God, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to the Blessed Dominic, and to you, Rev. Father Brother Dominic Aylward, representing the Very Rev. Father Brother William Nickolds, Provincial of England, in place of the Right Rev. Father Brother Vincent Ajello, Master-General of the Order of Preachers, and of his successors, according to the rule of St. Augustine, and the special institutions of the Sisters of Penance of our Holy Father St. Dominic, the care of which is committed to the aforesaid Preaching Brothers: that I will be obedient to you and to my other Provincials even unto death. In faith of which I here sign my name with my own hand.

MARGARET MARY HALLAHAN.

Witness, W. B. ULLATHORNE."

The form of protestation and the vows taken by the other Sisters differed slightly in language from the above, the

words explaining the sense of the vow of obedience as including the other two, being thrown into the protestation, whilst the vows themselves were taken directly "to you, Sister Margaret, Prioress of the Community of St. Catherine of Siena."

The profession of the three novices took place publicly in the church, which had been consecrated three months previously; and among those who attended the ceremony were Mr. and Miss Carpue, the former wearing his canon's dress, with his fur amess over his arm. A letter of congratulation from one of the Dominican Fathers at Hinckley conveyed the same words of encouragement that had been uttered by the Benedictine Provincial on the occasion of their clothing—*prospere procede, et regna.* To Mother Margaret it was a day full of consolation, one on which the foundation-stones were securely laid of the spiritual edifice which God had designed to raise. Whenever she recalled the thought of that day, or spoke of it to others, she failed not to dwell with a kind of rapture on every circumstance which could most strongly prove that God, and not man, was the founder. "This is the way I see it," she said, not long before her death; "that Almighty God would do the work Himself, and so He chose out the lowest instrument He could find, that no one else should have any part in it. You see He chose a sinful woman, a sickly woman, a woman without family, without friends, without education, and without reputation. If he could have chosen anything viler He would, but He could not,—so the work is His from beginning to end."

Nor was her joy lessened by the thought that the rising Institute had been placed in a special manner under the patronage of the Immaculate Mother of God. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception has continued from that day to be celebrated in the Congregation, with special devotion, as in a peculiar sense the feast of our foundation; and when the central Novitiate house was begun

at Stone in the year 1852, it seemed but natural that the church should be dedicated in the name of that Holy Mystery which had so long been associated with the origin of the Community.

CHAPTER V

1845–1847

THERE was a saying current among Mother Margaret's religious children in after years, that each new foundation was purchased at the cost of a life. The profession of the first four Sisters, which must be considered in one sense, as the greatest of all her foundations, was not exempt from this tribute, and the life which was in this case demanded was one which Mother Margaret held especially dear. Maria Roby, her devoted companion in so many labours, has already more than once been mentioned. Although her sister had been the first to receive the religious habit, Maria ardently aspired after the same happiness ; and while circumstances obliged her to postpone her wishes, she continued to render the Community all the services in her power, and to assist them in visiting the sick. She also lent her aid in many domestic occupations ; and during the month of December, 1845, she was frequently at the Priory, whither the Sisters had now removed from Spon Street, helping in the completion of a black velvet funeral pall, on which the religious were at work. The pall was finished by the 30th, and being stretched out on the ground, Maria by a sudden impulse lay down, and desired the Sisters to spread the pall over her, saying, as they did so, " I wonder for which of us this

pall will first be used." The next day she was seized with an apoplectic fit, and in a few hours expired. The immediate cause of this seizure is supposed to have been the distress occasioned by something that had been said which seemed to check her hopes of joining the Community. Her desire of embracing the religious life was so well known, and her association with the Sisters had been of so close and affectionate a nature, that, although she remained insensible, it was determined to give her the habit. This was accordingly done, and as one of the Sisters observed, " She would rejoice when she opened her eyes in the other world to find herself a novice of St. Dominic." Her name was entered in the profession-book of the Community as Sister Mary Catherine, the name she had always intended to assume ; and the terms in which the little notice of her death was drawn up were dictated by Mother Margaret herself. " Sister Mary Catherine Roby was clothed on the Feast of St. Sylvester, the 31st of December, 1845, and died a few hours afterwards of an apoplectic fit, brought on by her ardent desire to devote herself to Almighty God in our holy Order. Her admission among us being deferred on account of the delicate state of her health, her spirit was too ardent to bear the delay, and she died a martyr to her holy desires."

A prayer written in pencil was found a few days afterwards in her desk, wherein she recommends her vocation to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and entreats her, " if such be the will of Almighty God, to obtain that she may soon leave this world to seek our Lord where He is to be found, among the sick poor, to attend upon them and comfort them in their afflictions." When laid out in the habit before burial, crowds came to see her, and to attend her funeral. She was laid to rest in a vault in front of the Ladye Chapel, and such was the respect and emotion displayed by those who witnessed the ceremony, that some persons present observed no peeress could have had a

reater funeral. A square stone marks the spot of her pose, on which is cut the following inscription :—

" IN THE GRACE AND TENDER PITY OF CHRIST,
HERE RESTETH THE BODY OF SISTER CATHERINE, O.S.D.,
WHO DEPARTED ON THE FEAST OF SAINT SYLVESTER,
IN THE YEAR MDCCCXLV., ON WHOSE SOUL
JESUS HAVE MERCY. AMEN.
PATER. AVE. AMEN."

This event was very profoundly felt by the Community, as well as by all the friends of the deceased. One of the Dominican Fathers, who had known her well, and to whom an account of her death had been communicated, wrote in reply :—" Your wonderful and edifying account of Miss Roby's departure has a charm of sanctity about it that may encourage us to hope that her death, which in this case we may almost call her *dormition*, has been found precious in the sight of the Lord. The memory of it is not likely to fade away from the minds of those who witnessed it, and I hope it may take such a hold of St. Catherine's Convent as to become in course of time one of its holy and tender traditions, such as we generally find signalising and hallowing the beginnings of religious institutes. At all events, it cannot but be written as part of your convent chronicles."

At this time the Community included, besides the four professed religious, another of Mother Margaret's friends, who, even before her conversion to the Catholic Church, had been accustomed to visit the sick with some of the Sisters, and had been greatly struck by the example of self-sacrificing charity thus brought before her. She resided with them at first as a visitor, and then as a postulant, and received the religious habit in April 1846, being known in the Community as Sister M. Dominica Mustard. They may also be said at this time to have laid the foundation of

their first orphanage. A poor Irish woman, whose husband was absent in Ireland, died of fever, leaving four children altogether destitute. Unwilling to send these poor orphans to the work-house, Dr. Ullathorne made an appeal on their behalf to the congregation, who agreed to provide for one boy, while the other boy and two girls were taken charge of by the sisters. On this occasion the good-hearted people of Coventry showed an admirable spirit of charity. They contributed provisions for the support of the orphans, and more than one poor man came to the priest offering to adopt one of them for the love of God—one of those who made this generous proposal being himself the father of seven children.

Mother Margaret, however, was not disposed to yield her treasure into any one's keeping. When the three children were delivered over to her charge, "you would have thought," writes one of the religious, "that she had had the whole world given her." It was the first opportunity which had yet been afforded her of exercising that tender charity towards orphans which in her might almost be called a devotion. An orphan herself, she desired, in her grateful and compassionate soul, to elevate those whom God gave into her hands, even as He had elevated her. She had no notion of keeping any one down at the level of pauperism, or of marking them with its stigma in their dress or education. She understood that it is the character of God and of godly souls "to lift up the needy from the dust, and the poor from the dung-hill," and in her treatment of those under her care she constantly and successfully laboured to do this. Those who witnessed the reception of the Coventry orphans relate the delight with which she set to work to improve their appearance, and how the slender resources of the Community were made to furnish them all with a good suit of mourning. The children remained with the sisters for some time, the priory-loft being turned into a dormitory, until, to Mother Margaret's

reat grief, their father sent for them to Ireland, and she ad to give them up.

Meanwhile, as the Community promised to increase, it ecame necessary to consider what steps should be taken or establishing them in a residence of their own. It was roposed to purchase some house in a suitable part of the own, and adapt it to the use of the Community. This lan, however, was never one which Mother Margaret avoured. "I cannot *buy* a house," she would say; "I vant to build one. I should like to have a proper convent vith square cloisters." In vain did her advisers seek to rove to her the extravagance of such a plan. Hitherto nost religious communities in England had contented hemselves with adapting some private residence to re-igious purposes, and had not thought it requisite to xpend any large sum in the erection of conventual build-ngs.[1] For her, therefore, to insist on such a plan, who vas almost entirely destitute of means, might well appear n absurdity, and her director failed not to charge her "to ut it altogether out of her head." "But I could not put t out of my head," she would say, in relating the matter fterwards: "I suppose it was in the design of God, and hat He put it there."

This was, in fact, one of her principles, and, as appears rom what has just been said, a principle gained less by xperience than by intuition. From the very earliest ommencement of her religious life Mother Margaret had onceived the grand outlines of her future work; as her hildren were accustomed to say of her, "She seemed to have seen the pattern of all things in the Mount." The important influence exercised by the *religious house* in the formation and preservation of the *religious spirit* was one of those points in which she fully inherited the spirit of our great patriarch, St. Dominic, whose solicitude on this head

[1] The Dominican Convent of Atherstone had already been built after a regular conventual plan.

will be remembered by all who are familiar with his life. Her view was not the result of observation, hardly perhaps of reflection : it was a part of her religious sense, something which, to borrow a word of modern coinage, she had from the first *intued*. At a later period, indeed, this sense was deepened by experience, as she perceived how easily many portions of a religious rule fall into disuse and oblivion for want of the proper offices of a religious house. It was one of her mottoes that " we cannot have the right *things* till we have the right *places*." This instinct was always in her soul, and rendered her averse to expend the small capital of the Community on the purchase of an ordinary residence. The plan to be adopted was still under discussion when events took place which changed the future prospects of the little Community, and seemed for the moment to threaten their dissolution. The Vicariate-Apostolic of the Western District had become vacant in the October of 1845, by the death of Bishop Baggs, after he had scarcely filled it for two years. Dr. Ullathorne was nominated as his successor, the intelligence being first conveyed to him in a letter from Cardinal Acton. On receipt of this letter he proceeded to the school, where Mother Margaret was, as usual, engaged. Perceiving by his countenance that something had troubled him, she put down a little child that she held on her knee, and, following him into the house, exclaimed, " I see that you are a bishop ! " She felt how grave a crisis it was for herself and the Community, who so entirely depended on his support and guidance, and were as yet unprovided even with a home. Yet at that moment her thought was less for herself than for him, for she well knew that it was a summons from a sphere of action which engaged his whole heart to an office which, to use the words of Cardinal Acton, whilst pressing it on his acceptance, " must be regarded in England rather as a burden than as an honour." Dr. Ullathorne had already twice declined the Episcopate, but in

he present instance the arguments of the Cardinal were upported both by his religious superiors and by the enerable Bishop Walsh, who visited Coventry for the ex-ress purpose of tendering his affectionate counsel. After ignifying his acceptance to the Holy See, therefore, Dr. Ullathorne set out for Ratcliffe College, near Leicester, where he made a ten days' retreat in preparation for his consecration under the direction of the Very Rev. Dr. Pagani. His consecration took place at Coventry, on Sunday the 21st of June, 1846, the same day on which Pius IX. was crowned Sovereign Pontiff. All the bishops then present in England attended the ceremony, Bishop Briggs, V.A. of the Yorkshire District, being the consecrating prelate, assisted by Bishops Wareing and Griffiths. The sermon was preached by Bishop Wiseman, and among those present were Dr., then Mr. Newman, and his companions, who had but recently been received into the Catholic Church, and were then established at Mary Vale, or Old Oscott. This was the first occasion on which Mother Margaret met with one in whom, even before his conversion, she had always felt the deepest interest, and the friendship between them, once formed, remained unbroken to the day of her death. The ring of the newly-consecrated bishop was presented to him by the Protestant lady who has been mentioned in a former chapter, while the members of his own congregation offered, as a memorial of their grateful affection, a magnificent chalice, to be used at his daily Mass. It was presented at an open-air meeting outside the church, the Rev. F. Aylward, O.P., being invited by the people to act as their spokesman. A report of the ceremony of the consecration appeared in the *Tablet* newspaper, in which the state of the Catholic mission at Coventry was eulogised in glowing terms, and the existence of the Dominican Community was for the first time made known to the public. The lowliness of its origin was, however, described in exaggerated language, which was felt by the

relatives of the religious to be both unjust and injurious, and a letter of explanation in consequence appeared in a later number of the journal.

Meanwhile the question of their future plans had to be promptly decided. The Benedictine authorities, on whom the care of the mission now devolved, proposed (as we learn from a letter of Mother Margaret's) that the Sisters should continue at Coventry, and even offered to rent a house for them in the town if they would remain. The Dominican Provincial was equally desirous that they should settle at Leicester. Mother Margaret felt, however, that the foundation was still too young and unformed to be left entirely deprived of that paternal care which had hitherto, under God, been its main support. It was therefore determined to remove the Community into the Western District, where it might still enjoy the guidance and protection of him who might truly be regarded as its founder. Bishop Walsh gave his consent to this arrangement, as he said, out of consideration for the wants of the Western District, and the Benedictine Fathers courteously agreed that until their plans were more settled the religious should continue to occupy the Priory House at Coventry. Their stay there, however, was but short. The nuns of Atherstone, who had always shown a most sisterly interest in all that concerned the Coventry foundation, offered to receive the religious within their own convent until accommodation should be provided for them in Bristol. It may be proper to state that the permission of the Rev. Father Provincial was obtained both for the removal of the Community from Coventry and their sojourn at Atherstone. It was formally given in the following letter :—

"HINCKLEY, 15*th June*, 1846.

"DEAR MOTHER PRIORESS,—The reasons you have assigned for leaving Coventry and repairing to the Western District, under the auspices of the Right Rev. Dr. Ulla-

thorne, appear so satisfactory, that I cannot but consent to your acting conformably to them. I therefore hereby, in compliance with your request, grant permission to yourself and Community to leave Coventry at the time proposed, and to proceed to our convent at Atherstone, there to prepare yourselves for the duties awaiting you in the said district. . . . I remain, dear Mother Prioress, yours very faithfully in Christ, S. A. PROCTER, (Prov. O.S.D.)"

The hospitable invitation of the Atherstone Community was accordingly, in part, accepted, and on the 10th of July,two professed religious, one novice, and one postulant, left Coventry for Atherstone, where they remained for six weeks, joining in all the Community exercises. Mother Margaret and her remaining companion also paid them a short visit, returning to Coventry to make their final preparations for departure. It was a sad and desolate time ; Bishop Ullathorne had removed to Prior Park almost immediately after his consecration, and , left to herself, with her little band dispersed and homeless, Mother Margaret began to realise the difficulties and responsibilities of her new position. " When I left her at Coventry," writes Bishop Ullathorne, " as she knelt for the benediction she clasped my feet, a most unusual act for her, and wept a bitter flood." At all times painfully susceptible to that depression which visited her in the midst of her work for God, she experienced it at this moment in its fullest bitterness. She was leaving the scene of fruitful and happy labours for a dark and uncertain future, and the first letter she wrote after the Bishop's departure was headed by the words,"God alone, God alone, God alone ! " She never afterwards laid aside the use of these words, which have been adopted as the motto of the Congregation. " It was the circumstances which made the motto," she used to say ; " for with me, at that time, it was truly God alone ! " Not, indeed, that kind and liberal friends were

wanting to the Community at this critical time. The Carpues were foremost in offering their assistance, and would at once have taken a house at Bristol for the sole purpose of receiving the Community as guests under their roof; but this generous proposal was gratefully declined by Mother Margaret, who, deeply as she felt the kindness of these excellent friends, was unwilling to be dependent on their bounty. Offers of kindness were also made by Richard De Bary, Esq., and his wife, who were then residing at Leamington, and with whom Mother Margaret had already become united in close bonds of friendship. Of the hospitality of the Atherstone nuns we have already spoken, and we shall presently have to notice the singular kindness manifested towards the little Community by three other convents, who, by the affectionate assistance which they then rendered, earned a claim to be for ever remembered in the list of our most generous benefactors.

But all these expressions of sympathy,consoling as they were, did not avail to remove the cloud of depression that hung over Mother Margaret's heart: she instinctively turned from human consolation to "God alone;" and in the postscript to the first letter of this series, which has been preserved, and which is headed with the words "God alone! *my motto!*" she writes, "I am doing what I did before I came to England, begging Our Divine Mother, Our Holy Father St. Dominic, and Our Holy Mother St. Catherine, to go before us into the West to prepare and convert the hearts of the people."

A few extracts from these letters will best convey the state of her mind at this time, and the embarrassing position of the Community. After mentioning her reasons for declining the generous offer of the Carpues, she continues: "If your lordship will provide us with a house for a very short time, till Providence gives us one, we shall do very well with the income we have. *He who has the riches of Heaven and earth in His hand will not forget His poor*

es. . . . I never was placed as at present, obliged to t in all things alone, and I feel both anxious and pressed. Many, many times do I press my crucifix to y lips, and beg my Divine Spouse to be my counsellor nd guide. . . . The Benedictines offered to take a house r us in the town if we would have stopped. The Sisters Atherstone are quite happy, and feel as if they had got to a new world; the kindness of the nuns is truly sterly." In another letter she alludes to the recent cor-spondence in the *Tablet*. "We have had much to iscourage us lately, but God has had His own adorable esigns in it, and He will give us a resting-place at last. I ave been earnestly begging for humility lately, but I did ot expect the humiliation through the *Tablet*. . . . I elieve there is a part of Bristol where the poorest are, and here there is no chapel or school. Put us, my Lord, if you lease, where we shall be unknown, unnoticed, and for-otten, and we will never intrude ourselves on the notice f the public."[1]

Among the Benedictine Fathers who had been present t the ceremony of Bishop Ullathorne's consecration was he Rev. Father James Dullard, chaplain to the Benedictine Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration, then established at St. Benedict's Priory, Rugeley, but who had formerly resided t Cannington in Somersetshire. The Rev. Mother Mary Clare Knight, the venerable Prioress of this Community, etained her interest in theWestern District,and her brother, Mr. John Knight, besides possessing a considerable sum eft at his disposal on behalf of the missionary fund of the listrict by his late brother, Charles, was understood to be lesirous of contributing to the same purposes from his own neans. Father Dullard, who was aware of these circum-tances, and who from the first moment of his introduction o Mother Margaret had conceived a strong admiration for

[1] Letters dated July 1st, 4th, and 7th.

her character and sympathy with her designs, advised her to make known the position in which she was placed to the Prioress of St. Benedict's, Rugeley, who, as he assured her, had it in her power to assist her establishment in the Western District. In consequence of this advice, Mother Margaret drew up a formal statement of the position of the Community, its objects and present prospects, in the form of a letter addressed to the Prioress. "I wrote it," she says, in a letter to Bishop Ullathorne, "with much reluctance. I do not know how it is, but I do not feel as I used in regard of begging. I feel that one *Memorare* obtains more than asking many persons." A copy of this letter will be read with interest :—

"DEAR AND RESPECTED MADAM,—I would not have intruded myself on your notice, had not Bishop Ullathorne, and some other holy priests, desired me to do it, and I felt it would have been an act of disobedience not to have complied with his Lordship's wish. I have been led to understand that you have much influence in the Western District, and might be of much use to us, as, in accordance with Dr. Ullathorne's wishes, we are to remain there.

"I know not what to ask, but we stand most in need of a house ; our small income will be sufficient at present for our maintenance ; we will leave the rest to the providence of God. Now, I wish to speak in my own way to a Spouse of Christ, and feel assured that if it be God's holy will, He will dispose of the hearts of His faithful to help us to begin. Our only desire is to live and die in the service of the most poor children of our Divine Spouse, Jesus, and to propagate devotion to our Divine Mother, the Ever-Blessed Virgin. I believe our name and institute have never yet been rightly understood. We are of the ancient Order of St. Dominic, and called the Daughters of Penance of his Third Rule, and follow exactly the employments for which he instituted it: we instruct the poor and middle classes,visit

he sick and prisons, and endeavour to convert abandoned inners, but, above all, to propagate devotion to the Mother f God. It is above ten years since I was professed at Bruges, but last December I and three of my Sisters were anonically established as a religious community in England, for the above purposes.

"Our desire and wish at present is to endeavour by prayer nd the alms of the faithful to establish a *Catholic Hospital.* I do not mean to wait for a large place to be built for this urpose, but to begin, as soon as I have space and means, o take a few sick poor : for however often you may visit hem, you cannot be with them at times when they most eed it ; and many hours do many of them lie with parched ips, and no person to give them even a cup of cold water.

" We are six in number : four professed, one novice, and ne postulant ; five are at present at Atherstone Convent, we being a branch of the same holy Order,) awaiting his Lordship's orders. I remain here till next week.[1] It is necessary for them also to have a little rest, for we have had much labour of mind and body since we have been at Coventry, and this unexpected change, which has left us houseless, has not lightened our cares. We are happy to be in the service of his Lordship, for he has been to us a father, protector, and guide.

" I again apologise for intruding myself on your notice, for it is quite contrary to my principles. We wish to live unknown, unnoticed, and forgotten, if possible. The only wish I really have is that you and your holy Community will remember me and my dear Sisters before our mutual Spouse, and He will do all that is necessary to accomplish His own merciful designs. With much respect, I remain, dear Madam, yours most truly in Jesus,

MARGARET OF THE MOTHER OF GOD."[2]

[1] Mother Margaret was at this time alone in Coventry. One of the professed religious afterwards returned from Atherstone to be her companion.

[2] This form of signature appears for the first time in this series of letters.

Those who are familiar with Mother Margaret's ordinary epistolary style will not fail to trace in the above letter the feelings of constraint and hesitation with which she wrote. Nothing but obedience would certainly have induced her to take this step ; and, wholly ignorant as she was of the character and dispositions of her whom she addressed, she probably anticipated but little result to flow from such an appeal. She was, therefore, wholly unprepared for the warm-hearted and generous response which reached her by return of post :—

" St. Benedict's Priory,
" *Transl. of St. Thomas Cant.*

" My dear mother and Sister in Jesus Christ,—I thank you very sincerely for your beautiful letter, the contents of which have deeply interested me. I have already written on the subject to a friend who will, I confidently hope, do more than share my feelings. Yes, my very dear Sister, your Divine Mother will go with you into the Western District, and aid you and your saintly Bishop in the great work intrusted to him. I feel perfectly convinced you will be able at least to *rent* a house, to which we will gladly contribute, if the project fails which I have proposed to a friend ; so I hope a suitable residence for yourself and your Community will soon be found. You shall hear from me as soon as I get further intelligence ; in the meantime you and yours will have our united poor supplications to Heaven that all may succeed, to God's greater glory and your sanctification. Pray for us, I entreat you, and particularly for the most needy, your unworthy, but truly devoted Sister in our Lord,

Mary Clare Knight de Jesu."

The friend here alluded to was Mr. John Knight, who, in compliance with his sister's request, determined on presenting Mother Margaret with the liberal donation of £500

or the purpose of assisting her in establishing herself in the Western District. This donation was not, however, received until the January of the ensuing year, after she had already fixed her temporary residence in Bristol. Thus, then, began the friendship between these two holy and gifted souls, which afterwards grew and deepened by familiar intercourse, and to which Mother Margaret was indebted for so many pure and spiritual joys. And thus was formed the first tie between their two Communities, which was constantly strengthened by multiplied benefactions and proofs of affectionate confidence that can never be repaid. The perusal of the letter just quoted filled Mother Margaret with an overwhelming sense of grateful joy. "Oh, how good is God to us!" she writes; "who ever hoped in Him and His Blessed Mother and was confounded? . . . The letter is truly worthy of a Spouse of Christ; I am more overpowered with the goodness of God than with any humiliation. No, we can have nothing to fear when we work for this Divine Master!"

It was on the 13th of July 1846 that she finally left Coventry, with one companion; and after an interview with Bishop Ullathorne, who was then residing at Prior Park, she proceeded first to the Convent of the Visitation at Westbury, near Bristol, and on the following day to the Franciscan Convent of St. Elizabeth of Hungary at Taunton in Somersetshire. Both these Communities had sent hospitable invitations to the Dominican religious through Bishop Ullathorne, who, on first coming into the district, received many testimonies from them of loyal devotedness. She returned from Taunton to Westbury, and a few days later removed to the house which his Lordship had hired for his own temporary residence in King's Square, Bristol. Thus, at this juncture so critical to the newly-founded Institute, four of the old established Communities of England came to its support; and the daughters of St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Francis, and St. Francis of Sales contended

one with another which should acquire the best title to be regarded as our benefactors. Nor was this all : if Mother Margaret's friends were few, they were devoted. The Carpues were at this time preparing to remove to Clifton, for the sole purpose of being near her, and the Rev. William Vaughan, (afterwards Bishop of Plymouth,) in concert with E. Estcourt, Esq., the Bishop's private secretary, underwent incredible trouble in the attempt to find some suitable residence for the Community, their efforts for some months proving altogether unsuccessful.

During these months of suspense and anxiety the Community remained dispersed. On the 12th of August the religious from Atherstone removed thence to Westbury, hopes being then entertained that a house in Bristol had been secured. But as this hope proved fallacious, they remained the guests of the hospitable nuns of the Visitation for four months longer, during which time Mother Margaret and one other religious continued to reside at King's Square. From various passages in the correspondence of this period we are led to infer that it was a time of heavy trial and anxiety. " You speak of difficulties and trials," writes one of her friends ; " but our good God is sure to help you through. There always are difficulties and opposition, on the part even of good and well-meaning persons, when Almighty God puts some work in motion which He makes His own." In the midst of these troubles her constant resource was prayer, and in the simplicity of her faith she wrote more than one letter to Our Lord, which she requested to have placed in the tabernacle. Often afterwards when in difficulties did she pour out her soul in similar letters, which she was generally careful to destroy, though one or two, written at a later date, have accidentally been preserved.

By the end of November the Community at length succeeded in hiring a house in Queen's Square, Bristol. The furnishing of this house was not accomplished without

difficulties, and "many tears." The desolation of heart which Mother Margaret underwent at this time was so great, that she never afterwards passed through that part of Bristol without recalling it to mind. By the 7th of December, however, sufficient preparations had been made for the reception of the little Community, who were accordingly reassembled, six in number, and took possession of their new abode on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. The anecdotes of this period sufficiently attest that their poverty was something more than nominal. But poverty is generally felt as a light trial by a young Community; and the temporary make-shifts of a new foundation, such as using a crate for a chair, and sleeping in a china-closet, were inconveniences easily endured in the midst of the joy of reunion; while the fact of being for the first time under their own roof gave them a sense of freedom and independence which lightened every hardship. Nay, their very poverty made each new benefaction which they received an exquisite joy. No treasures purchased by their own wealth could ever have afforded them the same delight as they derived from an unexpected and most munificent present, which they received at this time from the Franciscan Community at Taunton. It consisted of a box containing, besides clothes for the poor, church-linen and vestments, candlesticks and lamps, with a handsome ciborium and chalice, in short, everything necessary for the service of their chapel. The chief contributor to this generous donation may perhaps with propriety be mentioned by name, as she has long since departed to her reward,—Sister Mary Bernardine O'Neill. She was for many years head-mistress of the young ladies' school connected with the convent, and being warmly attached to Mother Margaret, and interested in her work, she induced her pupils to contribute and to collect from their friends for the purpose of furnishing some of the chapel furniture, and to the day of her death continued to evince the same

kind interest in the prosperity of the Dominican Community. When this box was opened by Mother Margaret and Sister Mary Gertrude Roby, they both sat down and cried for joy and gratitude, "never expecting," as they said, " to have such beautiful things for their own."

The house in which they found themselves established was gloomy enough, and its cheerfulness was not increased by the reputation which it enjoyed of being haunted. Its former occupant had been a surgeon, and rumour affirmed that the remains of subjects whom he had dissected were buried in the cellars, and that the house was haunted by their ghosts. When it was understood that some nuns had taken up their abode in this suspected mansion, various additions, of the colouring so familiar to an English populace, were added to the tale, and it was thought advisable to have a thorough examination of the cellars, in order that these mischievous stories might be set at rest. The Rev. Mr. Vaughan, therefore, in company with Mr. Estcourt and a mason, proceeded to the spot, and began their search, in the course of which some small bones were actually disinterred. The priest called the attention of his companion by the words " *ossa parva*," and the mysterious sound of the Latin words in the dark cellar appears to have had a startling effect on the nerves of some present. On examination, however, the bones in question proved to be chicken bones, and thus ended the romance. More serious anxieties than those suggested by the ghost stories began, however, to overshadow the future. Bishop Ullathorne had to proceed to Rome on the affairs of his diocese, and for the first time Mother Margaret found herself left with the entire care of the Community in her own hands. Those who knew her only in later days, when long habits of government had accustomed her to responsibility, can but faintly realise how heavily for many years the burden weighed upon her, or how profoundly she felt her own insufficiency. At this moment her distress was augmented

y the failing health of Sister Mary Gertrude Roby, whose eligious spirit and prudent character had marked her out, n the judgment of her superiors, as qualified for the post f novice-mistress. Her threatened loss was doubly felt t this time, when the Community was rapidly increasing n numbers. Within three weeks of their taking possession f their house, four new postulants were received, one of hom belonged to the number of Mother Margaret's first ollowers at Coventry, whilst a second, in addition to other ualifications which rendered her most welcome to the eligious, brought a considerable accession of temporal neans, so that after her profession (which took place on he 24th of January, 1848), the Sisters became possessed f a certain fixed income, and were relieved from some of he pressing anxieties which up to that time embarrassed hem. But in spite of the urgent necessities of their osition, the promise of worldly advantages never induced Mother Margaret to accept any subject who did not appear o possess the necessary qualifications for the religious tate. More than one postulant presented herself, who vould have contributed materially to the revenues of the Community ; but of these, some were never received, and thers left, after a brief trial, in consequence of the un-avourable judgment formed by Mother Margaret on their ocation ; nor would she be moved from her determination y any arguments on the score of worldly prudence. The rogress of the Community was, nevertheless, steady and ontinuous, though some of the first-comers were hardly isposed to regard this rapid growth with favour. " Dear Mother," said one, who feared lest the multiplication of ubjects would not increase their joy, " let us have no nore postulants ! " " You foolish child ! " was the reply, ' let us have no such selfish speeches ; we shall have nore postulants in time than we shall know what to do vith."

Three of the postulants were clothed on the 17th of

January, 1847, just before the departure of his Lordship for Rome. "That day," writes one of the religious, "was the last on which Sister Mary Gertrude Roby took her meals in the refectory." The foundation of Bristol like that of Coventry, was not to be made without the sacrifice of a life. Her disease, which was consumption, had been augmented by anxiety and fatigue, and by the long separation from her beloved Superioress, which came on her at the very moment when her health was beginning to fail. She devoutly breathed her last on the 25th of February. Mother Margaret acutely felt her death. She was still a stranger in Bristol, and in the Bishop's absence felt almost without a friend. She had watched day and night by the bedside of the invalid, and when all was over carried the body down-stairs in her arms, and placed it in the coffin dressed in the white habit of the Order. The nuns of the Visitation on this occasion made her their debtors by a fresh act of kindness. After giving the religious a home under their convent roof for four months they now offered a resting-place in their private cemetery to the remains of this beloved Sister. The funeral was in many respects a very touching scene; the whole of the little Dominican Community were received at the entrance of the enclosure by the Superioress; and on leaving their conveyances, perceived, to their surprise, that in spite of the deep snow lying on the ground, they had been followed from Bristol by a number of the poor people, who wished to render this testimony of their respect. Four of the Dominican novices bore the body to the grave, the procession being joined by all the Religious of the Visitation. It was the second of her spiritual children whom Mother Margaret had given to God, and neither of those who had departed were destined to rest among their religious Sisters. The circumstance was recalled to her memory many years later, when reading the life of Père Lacordaire, whose two first companions were so rapidly severed from him by

death, and buried among strangers. She listened with tears to the narrative of his early trials, saying, with emotion, " I could think he was writing of ourselves ! "

The work undertaken by the religious, as soon as they had established themselves in their new home, was not a little laborious, considering the small number yet professed. A room in their own house was given up for the purpose of a poor school, and some time in the following year the poor schools attached to the Church of St. Mary on the Quay were likewise placed under their charge. The first step towards carrying out Mother Margaret's long-cherished plan of the Catholic hospital was taken so early as the January of 1847, when three infirm patients were received under her roof, two of whom lived to be removed to St. Mary's Hospital, Stone, where one survived until the year 1866.

Admittance was likewise obtained to the Bristol Infirmary, which was regularly visited two or three times a week, the Sisters being also constantly engaged in visiting the poor at their own houses. In all these duties Mother Margaret at that time took a leading part. " She was most active in the schools," writes one, at that time a novice in the Community, " encouraging the Sisters and keeping order, and her active mind was a great support. She also frequently visited the poor in their own houses, and often amused us by relating some of her adventures in the noted locality called Pipe Lane."

Besides these external works of charity, the more laborious task of training the religious in regular community-life had to be carried on in face of many difficulties. Often did Mother Margaret afterwards acknowledge how tenderly the providence of God had been manifested in the way in which her Community was gradually built up and developed. Those who formed its foundation-stones were precisely those best qualified for the severe and laborious life to which they were called. Their devotion to her

person, and their intimate knowledge of the heroic life she had led among them at Coventry, inspired them with an ardour which enabled them to overcome all the obstacles of poverty, and the discouragements of a period when the outline of religious life indeed existed, but when all its details had to be gradually filled up. But as subjects multiplied, the necessity of establishing the exercises of a regular novitiate became daily more and more pressing. Mother Margaret always felt a simple confidence that in God's good time the right instruments would be sent to effect the right work,and she thus expresses her sentiments in a letter written about this time to Mrs. Amherst :—

" I make no doubt but in a few years you will have the happiness of seeing this Order work much for the glory of God and the relief of the poor suffering members of Jesus. You know, dear madam, that when we wish to raise an edifice, we put in the foundation rubbish, sand, and dirt, then the better stones, and after the ornamental ones ; so it will be with the re-establishment of this holy Order in England. We, the beginners, are the rubbish, but God will send some good stones to form the edifice. The works of His almighty hand are mostly begun by poor helpless creatures, (like the foundation of His Church by twelve poor fishermen ;) so He has vouchsafed to bring into this land of heresy an Order almost forgotten, but which was instituted by its holy founder, our holy Father St. Dominic for the express purpose of destroying heresy, by devotion to the ever Virgin Mother of God, who is the Protectrix Superioress, and Mother of this Community."

But though she thus gave expression to a confidence which in time did not fail to be realised, she was keenly alive to the disadvantages under which her novices laboured owing to the want of more regular instruction. The need was felt of a more perfect knowledge of the Rule and Con

stitutions. Deprived of the valuable assistance which Dr. Ullathorne had rendered them in their first beginnings, Mother Margaret found herself called on to supply all that was required from her own resources. None among her present companions were qualified for the task of bringing to light each part of the rule, or of training the novices in the recitation of the office, the practice of the ceremonies of the Order, and other points of regular discipline. Neither was such an office the one for which her own genius was best adapted. Her soul, creative in its conceptions, generally needed the hand of another to carry her designs into execution. Doubtless at the time when the external aspect of her Community was least imposing, the grand outline of its future development was clearly sketched in her own mind; but to work it out, and reduce her ideas to a tangible form, required gifts of a different order, and was the work reserved for another hand. She was herself so conscious of her own insufficiency for the task, that she constantly prayed for some one who would be able to bring all things into shape, or, as she expressed it, "who would settle the Latin and the music;" and she used to say to her Sisters that "the right person had not come yet, but she would come in time." Meanwhile, she managed as well as circumstances would allow; and a great amount of mental labour and anxiety devolved on herself. The office was the first thing that required attention. At Coventry it had been recited in English, but this was only intended to continue until the religious should be competent to undertake the recitation of the Latin office. Mother Margaret always wished to establish the recitation of the Divine office in her Community, and it was her love of that sublime prayer of the Church which moved her at one time to wish so earnestly for admission into the Atherstone Community. In time the desire of her heart on this point was granted, and she lived to see this great privilege of the religious state secured to all her children; but at the period of which

we are now speaking, the circumstances of the Communit obliged them to content themselves with the Latin office o Our Lady, recited daily according to the Dominican rite to which were added certain portions of the Divine office such as the *Confiteor* and *Misereatur* at Compline, and tha devotion, so peculiar to the Dominican Order, of the *Salv Regina* after Compline. Valuable assistance was afforde by the Rev. James Newsham, a friend of one of the novices who having been obliged from ill health to resign his mis sionary duties, was at this time residing in Bristol, an often said Mass for the Community in their little chapel He kindly offered to give the Sisters lessons in the Lati office ; and by the month of April they were thus enable to begin reciting it in the language of the Church. A paper is preserved, written at this time, in Mother Mar garet's handwriting, containing directions for the cere monies, as prescribed by the Dominican constitutions fo the use of the novices. On some points she was uncertain but where such was the case, nature gained little from th doubt, the question being generally decided in favour o what was most austere. Thus for the first three years th religious stood during the entire office, not being awar of the rule which prescribes that each side of the choi should sit alternately during the chanting of the psalms It is truly surprising, considering the circumstances of th Community, and the absence at that time of any Englis books on the rule, that so large a portion of it should hav been thus early brought out and reduced to practice. Th essentials of religious life were all observed. The chapte of faults was held regularly, and so strict was the disci pline enforced among the religious, that, to use the expres sion of one of them, "penance was their daily bread." "W were never spared, in or out of chapter," writes another " but constantly exhorted to fervour, being often told b our Mother that she would rather work with one ferven religious than with a hundred who had not the right spirit.

At recreation the Flemish *Zede-puncten* was often produced, from which Mother Margaret would read aloud, encouraging her children to perseverance after the pattern of the saints of the Order.

Bishop Ullathorne's absence from his diocese was not prolonged beyond Palm Sunday; but his short stay in Rome was productive of several important results. Before he left England it had been agreed that some steps should be taken for securing the future position of the Community, and if possible, for obtaining his appointment as their Canonical Superior, not in quality of Ordinary, but as Delegate of the Master-General of the Order. This determination had not been taken without the advice of the English Dominican Superiors; and a letter is preserved from the English Provincial, (Father Augustine Procter,) dated January 16, 1847, expressing his readiness zealously to enter into his Lordship's views. He even visited Bristol to confer with the Bishop on the subject, previous to his departure for Rome, and furnished him with letters addressed to the Right Rev. F. Vincent Ajello, Master-General of the Order, setting forth the wish of the English Dominicans that Bishop Ullathorne should be appointed Superior in perpetuity, of all the English religious Sisters of the Third Order.

A letter from his Lordship, dated Marseilles, February 3, gives a brief notice of the state of the Dominican Order in France, and of an interview with that extraordinary man whose name is so closely associated with the restoration of the Order, and the religious movement in that country. Narratives such as these were ever a source of pure joy to Mother Margaret. It is not too much to say that at any time she would gladly have given her life for the advancement of the Order, and whatever concerned it stirred her heart like a trumpet, however little her own interests might thereby be affected. In the midst of her desolation during the previous autumn, she had been

cheered by the tidings that the Fathers of the English Province had felt themselves in a position to reassume the use of the religious habit, and that by Rosary Sunday " all were to appear in the Dominican uniform." She hailed this event as auguring the revival of the Order in this country ; and it was with kindred feelings of delight that she read the notice of Lacordaire, of his genius blended with humility, his hopes for France, and his noble aspect with the white habit and shaven crown of a true Friar Preacher.

Arrived in Rome, his Lordship entered into communication with the Master-General, who manifested the utmost readiness to meet his wishes. The Bishop was invested with powers for governing and establishing new houses of the Third Order. " Everything requisite has been done for the establishment of the Sisters of Penance," he writes " and, at my request, the General has written a letter to you ; and though I did not even mention the subject, he supposes in the letter that any other Communities established in the District will be under your general direction. The Holy See has given me a Rescript, with power to establish *all* approved Orders, and as many convents as may be required, in answer to my especial application for *your* convent, so that I return home provided in all those matters." In his farewell audience with the Holy Father a special blessing was also asked and obtained for the Dominican Community.

The following is a translation of the letter alluded to above as addressed to Mother Margaret by the Master General :—

" Ospizio Minerva, Rome,
" *February* 26, 1847.

" Beloved Daughter in Jesus Christ, Sister Margaret Mary Hallahan,—His Lordship Bishop Ullathorne, the distinguished benefactor of our Order, has given me great cause of consolation, by informing me of

his solicitude in the great undertaking of propagating it in the kingdom of England. He is thinking of founding new Houses of Tertiaries in the Western District of the island, *of which you will be the Superioress, under the direction of the same excellent Bishop*,[1] who chooses you for that honourable office. I rejoice in assuring you of my high esteem, since the fact of your being chosen for such a burden, by such a man as Monsignor Ullathorne, so skilful in discerning true merit, is a proof that he has discovered in you those distinguished qualities of mind and heart necessary in one who is to preside over a great establishment composed of generous souls, who devote themselves to the arduous works of charity. You will not fail to pray, and to cause your Sisters in religion to pray for the advancement of our Order, that it may worthily correspond to the intentions of our holy patriarch, St. Dominic, who instituted it that it might be used for the conversion of sinners, and of infidel nations. Nor will you in your fervent prayers be unmindful of me, imploring for me, from our Lord, light to govern the Order committed to me, and strength to bear the burden, while with paternal affection I bless you in our Lord. Your servant, in our Lord,

F. VINCENT AJELLO,
Master-General of the Order of Preachers."

The reception of this letter was a real consolation to Mother Margaret. It placed the English Conventual Tertiaries for the first time in direct communication with the Master-General, and few things were capable of giving her greater pleasure, than to find herself and her religious Sisters saluted as his children by the successor of St.

[1] The words we have italicised are worthy of remark, as showing that the plan for uniting all the convents of this Institute into a Congregation, under one general Superioress, was thus originally suggested by the Master-General of the Order; although, by the terms here used, he appears at this time to have contemplated the limitation of the Congregation within the Western District.

Dominic. The authority conferred on Bishop Ullathorne, as Delegate of the General, was at once recognised by the English Superiors of the Order. "The Bishop's acts," writes the Provincial, "in consequence of the powers he has received from the General, will not require my sanction; especially as I myself petitioned the General for that purpose." Nor was it thought necessary to obtain any further confirmation of these powers from the Holy See (beyond the general terms of the Rescript already mentioned) until four years later, when steps were taken which will be noticed in their proper place.

The other incident in Bishop Ullathorne's visit to Rome, which bore reference to the little Community at Bristol, was of a more private character. Before leaving England he had given confirmation in his private chapel at King's Square, Bristol, to four sisters, recent converts to the Catholic faith, at which ceremony Mother Margaret had been present. The family were now spending the winter in Rome, and one of the sisters, who had already felt attracted to the Dominican Community,placed the decision of her vocation in the Bishop's hands. He wrote to Mother Margaret, announcing to her that she possessed "a new daughter;" but it was not until two years later that she actually joined the Community, in company with one of her sisters.

The Bishop's return was followed by the profession of the eldest novice, who had accompanied the Community from Coventry, an event worthy of notice, as being the first occasion on which the white habit was worn in public by the newly-professed. The ceremony took place in the Church of St. Mary's on the Quay, and such was the crowd that attended to witness the unusual spectacle, that the priests thought it prudent to provide for the maintenance of order by issuing tickets, a step exceedingly distasteful to Mother Margaret. The selection of the public church for the celebration of the ceremony was necessitated by

the narrow limits of the Community Chapel, which consisted of a very small room, communicating through glass doors with another room, into which seculars were admitted three evenings in the week, when the Rosary was recited in common. About twenty or thirty persons generally assisted at this devotion. The propagation of the Rosary was, of course, the chief instrument used to increase among the people a solid devotion to Our Blessed Lady, and a knowledge of the mysteries of the faith. But it was not the only means by which Mother Margaret manifested her zeal on this point. When she first came to Bristol no image of Our Lady was to be seen in any of the Catholic churches or chapels, nor had the exercises of the month of Mary as yet been introduced. They were first performed in the Church of St. Mary's on the Quay, in the May of 1847, by the Rev. P. O'Farrell, O.S.F., at Mother Margaret's petition. She lent him the French "*Mois de Marie*," from which the meditations were taken, and sent over to Ireland for an image of Our Lady to be publicly exposed during the month, for which she paid £3. She also induced an artist in Bristol to make a mould from Deger's well-known statue, and paid him £16 for doing so, no inconsiderable sum, considering the then straitened circumstances of the Community. From this mould a vast number of small statues were cast, such as have since become very common, though at the time they were quite a novelty, and so many of these were sold that the artist realised a handsome profit. Another devotion which Mother Margaret was active in propagating was that to St. Philomena, by means of whose oil many remarkable cures were at this time effected. One of these cures was that of a young person who had been two years confined to her bed, but who, after using the oil, recovered so entirely as to be able to join a religious Community. A little girl, under the care of the Sisters, who suffered so intensely from inflamed eyes as to be quite blinded, likewise recovered

after the first application of the oil, and never again suffered from a similar cause. She had been received into the convent in consequence of a promise which Mother Margaret made to Our Lady, to take seven orphan children in honour of the Seven Dolours. The house at Queen's Square possessed no accommodation that could be adapted to the purpose of an orphanage; but a beginning was made by the reception of this little girl, then eight years old, who was the child of respectable parents, but had been left friendless by the death of both. She was educated in the middle school, which was begun at Queen's Square, after the poor-schools of St. Mary's were placed under the care of the religious, and in due time the little orphan became one of Mother Margaret's religious children[1]; the first of those who, being brought up in her own schools before their admission into the Community, she was wont to denominate "her babies" and for whom she entertained a peculiar affection. In time the number of orphans received far overpassed the promised seven, for it was difficult for Mother Margaret to shut her heart to the claims of destitute children. Her sympathies were excited on the first Whit-Monday after her establishment in Bristol by the sight of the Protestant schools, who, as usual, assembled and walked in procession with the clubs, passing through Queen's Square on their way. She observed how much they seemed to be enjoying themselves, while the poor Catholic children, for whom no such holiday was provided, were running after their more fortunate neighbours to see what they could not share. "Next year," she exclaimed, in the fulness of her heart, "I will take care that the Catholic schools are equally cared for!" And, as we shall see, she failed not to keep her word.

The active share which she took at this time in all the

[1] The Religious here alluded to is Sister M. Raymund Sunbury, who, after many years of devoted service in England, was one of the band of volunteers chosen to make the foundation in Adelaide, South Australia, where she is still (1929) living.

charitable labours of the religious has left its traces in various characteristic anecdotes. At one time we hear of her taking off her shoes and giving them to a poor beggar, to the no small vexation of one of her Sisters, who acknowledges that she did not precisely know how to provide her with another pair. A lady calling to see a sick woman in Bristol, heard the invalid speaking in raptures of the visit of two religious, one of whom she described as possessing "such a voice!" and becoming afterwards acquainted with the Community, she soon felt sure to whom that voice must have belonged. Some of Mother Margaret's experiences at this time were, however, a little mortifying, and induced her somewhat to alter the method she had hitherto observed in the distribution of charity. On first coming to Bristol, her open-handed liberality knew not how to deny itself to anything that bore the semblance of distress, and one winter, as she herself expressed it, "they clothed all Marsh Street." But she learnt, by a few practical lessons, to temper her profuse generosity with some degree of prudence. The conviction gradually forced itself on her mind that the most effectual method of administering the charities of a Community is less by indiscriminate almsgiving to those outside the walls, than by providing for the relief of the sick, and the destitute orphans received under the convent roof. One incident, which had its share in producing this conclusion, was often related at recreation. The religious had been requested by one of the priests to visit a poor woman whom he had that morning anointed, and who was supposed to be dying. Mother Margaret and another Sister accordingly hastened to the street indicated, but on coming to the corner of the court where the invalid lived, they were surprised to catch sight of her dressed, and hanging out some clothes. At the first glimpse of her approaching visitors she ran in-doors, but not so quickly but that they were able to follow her in time to behold her getting into bed again, ready to act the

part of the dying woman to great perfection. Occurrences of this sort, without in any degree cooling Mother Margaret's charity, determined her on diverting it into other channels. She never prohibited the giving of relief to those who applied for it, and she would often say that it was well she was not portress, or she should give away at the door all there was in the house. But she unquestionably gave the preference to those charities superintended by the religious themselves within the convent, and her decision was based on solid grounds.

In the August of 1847 she was attacked by malignant typhus fever, which she caught visiting a poor family who were laid prostrate by the disease. The moment she entered the room in which they were, and inhaled the pestilential atmosphere, she felt she had taken the infection. Nevertheless she remained until she had discharged her duties to the sick, and then returned home, where the fever she had taken soon manifested itself in so alarming a form that her life was despaired of. "In the height of the fever," writes Bishop Ullathorne, "she told me, 'I shall not die, I have not yet done my work.'" Yet she did what she could to provide for some of the necessities of her children in case she should indeed be taken from them. It never occurred to her to suppose for a single moment that the continuance of the Community depended on her single life; such an idea would have seemed to her dishonourable to the work of God; but she desired at least to leave behind her such an outline of her general design as might serve as a guide to those into whose hands its direction would fall. In the midst of her sufferings, therefore, she exerted herself to draw up such a sketch the original sheets of which, stained with her blood, were unfortunately destroyed, but the copy, made at her desire, continued for some years to be used for the instruction of the novices.

In this document, which is of considerable length, she

reats in separate chapters of the Office, of the devotions of ne Sisters, of the spirit and practice of penance, and of ne proper manner of visiting the sick, and of conducting ne schools or hospitals under their charge. She concludes ith an injunction never to refuse admission into the Comunity to any person simply on account of their state or ondition of life, "remembering," she says, "that your rst Mother is one of the most contemptible of God's reatures, who, in the world, had to earn her bread in the weat of her brow."

The suffering caused by the fever was increased by the ecurrence of one of those lumbar abscesses to which she ad so long been subject; and this was followed by exaustion so extreme as to render the Sisters very unwilling o leave her at night; but she would not listen to their ntreaties that one religious, at least, might be suffered to emain with her; and insisted on all retiring to rest. They eluctantly obeyed; but in the middle of the night, Sister Mary Rose was so strongly impressed with the conviction hat our Mother was in want of assistance, that, in spite of he prohibition, she ventured to steal into the room to see hat all was right. It was fortunate that she did so; for he found Mother Margaret insensible, and to all appearnce dying. Promptly procuring a restorative, she knelt n the bed, and poured it down the patient's throat. Mother Margaret afterwards explained that, feeling her trength fail her in the night, she had sent her good angel o Sister Rose, hoping he would inspire her to come to her id.

Her recovery was slow, and interrupted by alarming elapses, so that for sixteen weeks she was unable to leave er room. The poverty of the Community was often ainfully felt during this long illness; but, as usual, the ender providence of God came to their help when most distressed. One day, when they wished to get some ranges for the invalid, they found there was not a penny

in the house to buy one. "I am too ill to pray," said Mother Margaret; "but put a light before Our Lady, and she will help you." They did as she desired, and the next morning's post brought a letter from Mr. Carpue, enclosing a cheque for £50. "It almost made our Mother well," writes one Sister, "she was so delighted and so grateful to God." Even whilst confined to her bed she did not allow her weak and suffering state to interrupt her habits of vigilance over the Community. "When we went to office," continues the same authority, "our Mother used to listen from her sick-bed to our recitation, and if we made any mistake she was sure to detect it, and knock at the wall."

Soon after her recovery a public retreat was given in Trenchard Street, by Dr. Gentili and Father Furlong, with remarkable success. To use the expression of the Vicar Apostolic, "it commenced a new order of things in Bristol." But its results were far from satisfying the zeal of Father Gentili. He observed, that the space of fourteen days, usually allotted to the exercises of the mission, did not suffice for the work that had to be got through; and that many of those, whom these exercises were most calculated to benefit, were never able to take part in them. He found that in large English towns, where there are few priests, and a great number of negligent Catholics, many persons are only stirred up to attend the mission by the effect produced on them by the special services which mark its close. He wished, therefore, to try the experiment of prolonging a mission through an entire month. It was agreed to make the experiment in the following year, in the Church of St. Mary's on the Quay, and this was accordingly done during part of the months of February and March, 1848.

These two visits to Bristol revived the intimacy between Mother Margaret and Dr. Gentili, which had begun at Coventry. He often said Mass for the Community in their little chapel, and heard their confessions as extraordinary.

He took a great interest in their progress, though he often assured Mother Margaret that English ladies would never be found to enter an Institute, the rule of which was so penitential, and where, through the absence of lay Sisters, so much humble labour necessarily devolved on the religious. In this he showed but an imperfect appreciation of the national character, for neither of these features of Mother Margaret's Community ever proved obstacles to its extension. The religious, on their part, entered heartily into all his zealous plans, and exerted themselves to induce the people to attend the mission; they also assisted in instructing the women and girls in the schoolroom, and preparing them for the sacraments.

This memorable mission was productive of much fruit, but was fatally exhausting to the missioner. In order that he might be always on the spot, and might lose no opportunity of ministering to those who sought his aid, Dr. Gentili lived, and even slept, in the sacristy. He only left the church for dinner, and replied to all the representations urged on him, that it did him no harm. In point of fact, however, this manner of life was fast wearing out his vital strength; in fifteen months he had preached sixteen missions, and continuing the same arduous labour after leaving Bristol, he passed over to Ireland in the April following, and there, as is well known, ended his heroic career.

The symptoms of failing health which had been betrayed in Dr. Gentili's appearance during the course of the Bristol mission, had fully prepared Mother Margaret for the intelligence of his death, which she received in the autumn following. She deeply regretted his loss and ever spoke of him as one of the chief instruments who had been raised up by God for the revival of religion in this country. "Our Blessed Lady," she wrote, on receiving the sad news, "will not forget that he was the first to have her carried in England, at Coventry."

CHAPTER VI

1848-1850

MORE than a year had now passed since the settlement of the Community in Bristol, and they were still unprovided with a permanent home. The house in Queen's Square had never been intended as more than a temporary residence, but it was not until October, 1847, that any decision was taken as to their ultimate plans. This decision was in part brought about by circumstances connected with the Catholic Mission at Clifton. The ground afterwards occupied by the buildings of St. Catherine's Convent was at that time the burial-ground attached to the chapel and priest's house, whilst the site of the present cathedral presented a most desolate spectacle. The whole property had been purchased some years previously, at an enormous cost, for the Franciscans, by Father Edgeworth, who began the erection of a large church in the Italian style, which was raised to a certain height when unfortunate pecuniary embarrassments obliged him to suspend further operations, and the property came into the hands of the Newport Bank, to which he was a creditor. The unfinished building, with its huge half-raised pillars remained for some years an unsightly ruin, a disgrace and reproach to the Catholic body. The vast substructures, later used as schools, had been arched over, but the arching was beginning to suffer injury as the lime of the masonry had dripped through the vaulted roof, owing to the exposure of the building to the action of the elements.

he proprietors of the bank were anxious to get the whole roperty off their hands, and the proposal had been made o purchase it for a public market. Bishop Ullathorne as at that time most anxious to provide a church which ight serve the purposes of a cathedral, and he agreed to urchase the whole property for the sum of £3,000.

He determined to abandon all thoughts of completing he church according to its original design, which would ave entailed far larger expenditure than could be met by he funds at his command; and to content himself with oofing in the shell of the building, after a plan which re-arded security rather than architectural beauty. The ortion of ground occupied by the chapel and cemetery ppeared to offer a desirable site for the proposed convent, nd was accordingly purchased by the Community for the um of £1,000. The plan, as contemplated by his Lord-hip, was announced to the public in a Pastoral, dated 8th November, 1847. After explaining his intentions with egard to the completion of the church, he continues," Were he church completed for use, the present small and inade-quate chapel would be devoted to the purpose originally ntended, of forming part of a convent. The Sisters of Penance are prepared to purchase it at its full value, in part payment of the purchase-money of the whole pro-perty; and by the aid of their friends and the faithful, would hope in time to form the site into their convent, with the view of finally adding an orphan-house."

Mr. Knight's donation of £500 had been made for the xpress purpose of being expended on the purchase or rection of a convent, and it furnished one half of the urchase-money of the property. The thousand pounds which formed the only remaining capital of the Com-munity furnished the other half, leaving £500 towards the rection of the necessary buildings. After the purchase ad been completed, the Bishop, who had for some time eft King's Square, and resided in the chapel-house, re-

moved from thence, and took up his residence in Meridian Place; but the Community continued in Queen's Square until the Lent of 1848. Early in Lent they removed to Clifton, but the accommodation in their new home proved exceedingly limited. The chapel-house contained two sitting-rooms and seven bedrooms, or rather cells, four of which were over a portion of the chapel, and were ranged on either side of a narrow passage, at the end of which was a window looking into the chapel below. Besides the Community, which now consisted of six professed Sisters, together with several novices and postulants, there were the three hospital patients, and one little boarder; another inmate being added to the household, soon after their instalment, in the person of a poor woman dying of cancer. A room over the sacristy, and the organ loft, were arranged to accommodate some of these objects of charity, and a house was hired in Berkeley Place, where a certain number of the religious were received, one of the rooms serving as the middle school. Mr. and Mrs. De Bary were at this time living near the convent, and Mr. De Bary, who felt a warm interest in the Clifton foundation, undertook to beg for funds towards the erection of the convent. In doing so he exposed himself to many insults and humiliations, and earned the lasting gratitude of the Community. The pro-cathedral, meanwhile, rapidly progressed, but until it was completed the convent chapel continued to be used for the purposes of the mission, and the passage looking into the choir served the religious as their choir. A side-altar was erected in the chapel, on which was placed the image of Our Lady, a circumstance not altogether acceptable to some of the congregation. In May, Bishop Ullathorne, at the request of the other Bishops, proceeded to Rome with the view of obtaining the Hierarchy, the Very Rev. Dr. Hendren, O.S.F., holding the office of Vicar-General during his absence. When Whit-Tuesday came, Mother Margaret did not forget her

resolution to provide a holiday for the Catholic schools. The unfinished buildings at the pro-cathedral were given up for the day to the use of the children, and arrangements were made for receiving two hundred, who walked processionally up Park Street with banners flying, one of these being a banner of Our Blessed Lady. This was considered by some a most audacious proceeding, and gave rise to many murmurs. "Mother Margaret and *her doll*" were spoken of in severe terms; and even good Dr. Hendren could not resist telling her that she was "a very daring woman." "I thought he meant it as a compliment," she said, in repeating the story, "for at that time I knew so little of the real feeling of English people that I thought everyone must be as pleased to see Our Lady as I was myself." From this time the meeting of the Catholic schools continued to take place yearly, until the great increase of numbers rendered it impossible, but the procession with banners was not again attempted. The display, indeed, had not greatly differed from that annually made by the Protestant schools on the same occasion, but there still existed a feeling of timidity on the part of many Catholics, which rendered them averse to any innovation on old habits which had been formed during long years of persecution. Moreover, Mother Margaret herself was regarded with distrust by some persons who thought her lowly origin unfitted her to be the head of a religious Community. Remarks of this kind were sometimes addressed to herself, and were often a source of humiliation and uneasiness; and she frequently prayed that if she were really an obstacle to the progress of the Community, it would please God to remove her.

Before beginning the building of the convent it was settled that she should pay a short visit to Belgium, for the purpose of soliciting alms, and providing some of the requisites of a religious house not easily procured in England. During her absence, news was sent her that the image

of Our Lady had been removed from the chapel in compliance with the prejudices of some among the congregation. The intelligence moved her more than the loss of all her worldly possessions would have done, and she expressed her indignation in no measured terms. "I have been in many passions on Our Lady's account," she used to say, "and when they turned her out of the chapel, I told some of them *they* might stay away if they liked, but that Our Lady should never be turned out." The image was replaced immediately on her return, when the chapel ceased to be used for the service of the mission. The pro-cathedral was opened for Divine service, and the tabernacle, benches, and other furniture of the chapel were removed thither. The chapel, with its bare walls, presented a desolate appearance, which struck to Mother Margaret's heart, for she had not foreseen or provided against this emergency. What she most felt was being deprived of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and she sat down in the chapel and cried; but her kind friend, Miss Lynch, who was present at the time and witnessed her distress, hastened to relieve it. "Dear Mother," she said, "you shall not be without Our Lord;" and going out at once she purchased an iron safe, to serve as a tabernacle. Little by little the chapel was supplied with necessaries, and though far from possessing anything of its later beauty, it had a certain devotional aspect. The Rosary continued to be recited by the religious as at Queen's Square, and the chapel being open to the public, numbers used to attend on Rosary-evenings to take part in this devotion.

Meanwhile, fresh and unexpected trials were in store for the Community. During the last visit of Bishop Ullathorne to Rome it had been determined to remove him from the Western to the Central District, and in the beginning of August, 1848, he left Clifton and took up his residence at Birmingham. The blow was doubly felt by Mother Margaret at a moment when, in addition to her

her cares, she found herself involved in the troubles building, a matter in which she was then altogether experienced. The entire charge of the Community now volved on her, for though his Lordship continued to act Ecclesiastical Superior, the active part he had hitherto ken in the government of the Community was necessarily minished by his removal to another diocese. Applica-ons were already being made for filiations of the religious Manchester, Leamington, Coton, and elsewhere, and l these proposals had to be considered and replied to. other Margaret was herself persuaded that the number the Sisters was still too small to attempt any new founda-ons, but she nevertheless placed herself unreservedly at e disposal of her superiors. "You speak of a foundation Manchester," she writes; "I fear we are too few to vide, but I will do whatever you wish. Such things as ginning in any other place must depend wholly on you. have never made any move, or left one place for another, ıt by obedience, and I wish always to do the same. herever you wish me to go, I hope to be ready and willing. I can only promote devotion to Our Beloved Mother, and lp to teach the people to love God and to pray, it matters ɔt where I am, although nature would feel the separation om my dear Sisters."

At this time of trouble and desolation a new friend and nefactor was given to the Community in the person of e Rev. Frederic Neve, who, soon after his ordination and ɔpointment to the mission of Clifton, became chaplain and rector to the convent. On leaving the Western District, ishop Ullathorne placed the religious under his fatherly otection, and in his unwearied solicitude they found a ıpport which at that time was greatly needed. On the nd of September, 1848, he made his profession as a ertiary of the Dominican Order in the hands of the Pro-ncial, and received the necessary powers for erecting the ɔnfraternity of the Rosary. From this time he himself

led the recitation of the Rosary, and the evening servic at the convent drew a devout and increasing congregatio This *planting of the roses of Mary*, to use the phrase familiar with the historians of the Order, was a source many spiritual graces. "It would do you good," writ Mother Margaret, "to see our little chapel now on Rosar nights. We have Our Divine Mother in it, and things our own fashion. Many have already been received in the Confraternity." The custom began of a short instru tion being delivered by the chaplain on Rosary-evening and this attracted many hearers. The preacher's fi discourse was on the subject of humility, and he enforc his lesson by begging the prayers of the people to assist hi in his work. In "those fruitful days," as one writer ca them, the little chapel was always crowded, and the on place which the religious could occupy was the passa before mentioned, where they heard Mass through t window. These services, simple and edifying as they we excited displeasure in some quarters, and the most pr posterous motives were assigned to those who originat them. It was said that Mother Margaret was tryi to get herself a name, that "she was goi too fast, and must be stopped"; but it must added, that if these were the sentiments of a sm section of the public, who affected to see danger in a attempt at popularising devotion, others, including tho who had the best right to pass judgment on the questio regarded these services as a blessing to the people, and e couraged them with their warmest approbation.

Bishop Ullathorne had been succeeded in the Weste District by Dr. Hendren, who proved himself a kind a sincere friend to the Community. Sadly as she felt t loss of Bishop Ullathorne, Mother Margaret's respect f the episcopal office moved her to give his successor festive welcome, as she had seen done in Belgium similar occasions. She even exerted herself to make h

1. Mother Margaret's statue of Our Lady
2. Mother Imelda Poole
3. Mother Francis Raphael Drane

an offering, out of the slender funds of the Community, for the service of the diocese, in acknowledging which he condescended to say : " It is I, rather, who should make this offering to you ; *for the evening services at your chapel are sanctifying my people.*" One of his first acts after his appointment was to give permission for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the convent chapel on certain feast-days, and Mother Margaret writes of this, in a kind of rapture : " Bishop Hendren has signed the book ! I feel richer than if I possessed £1,000 ; for if with time we can have all these devotions, it will save thousands of souls. I have no other wish, will, or desire, but to extend God's reign upon earth. We have told the poor people that the chapel is theirs, and that they must be at home in it."

In spite of these encouragements, her new position and the increase of her responsibilities preyed much on her mind, and even affected her health. Her correspondence bears traces of deep mental disquietude, and of that sense of fear and isolation with which her soul was so often beset. While all was dark and incomprehensible to her own eyes, the hand of Providence in these trials was clearly discernible to others. " I have never for a moment doubted," writes Bishop Ullathorne, " that all these changes and trials were designed for the subduing of whatever in your strong nature has not yet been brought under the entire influence of Divine grace. Have courage ! . . . Bodily rest is a necessity you must attend to, and, depend upon it, it would make your beloved children more happy to see you take it. . . . Depend upon it, this separation, amongst other providential reasons, is that you may lean more fully on Our Lord."

If her anxieties were at this time increased by the weight of temporal cares, it must also be owned that the proofs of God's bounty and providence which the Community daily received were sufficient to inspire them with confidence. The building of the convent was a heavy drain on their slender resources, and they were often embarrassed how to

discharge the expenses which it entailed upon them. But, as Mother Margaret was accustomed to say, her bank was in heaven. St. Catherine has declared that "the clemency of God becomes the servant of those who put their trust in Him," and the history of every religious Order proves the truth of her words. If the humble annals of our own Institute present no such narratives of miraculous assistance as are to be found in the lives of our Holy Father St. Dominic, or St. Agnes of Montepulciano, they are at least not deficient in notable answers to prayer. One of these occurred in the autumn of this year. After the chapel at Clifton had been given up to the use of the religious, they formed a portion of it into their choir; but their poverty did not at first admit of their procuring stalls. Mother Margaret, however, could not rest satisfied till the choir was properly furnished; and, after debating for some time whether she should venture on so large an order at a time when she had not a sixpence to spend, she determined to run the risk, and to leave it to Providence to supply the means. The stalls were accordingly ordered, at a cost of £30, which in those days was a sort of fabulous sum, and many were the prayers offered up that, when they arrived, the money might in some way be found to pay for them. On the very day that they were set up in the chapel a letter came by post enclosing the exact sum. Another story, belonging to this year, will perhaps raise a smile in those who are not accustomed to the notion of providential interference manifesting itself in such homely details. When Christmas approached, Mother Margaret was anxious to regale her children with better fare than ordinary: she wished much to give them a Christmas turkey, but did not feel quite justified in buying one. She therefore told them that if they wanted a turkey they must pray for it—a command they in all simplicity obeyed. When Christmas Eve came, a ring was heard at the bell, and one of the Sisters exclaimed, in joke, "That is the turkey!" She ran

to open the door, and found that a man was actually waiting outside with a turkey in his hand that had been sent as a present. She carried it in high glee to the Community-room, and the Sisters were still amusing themselves over the incident, when another ring came and another turkey, and a little later a goose, and so on, till they found that they were not only supplied with a Christmas-dinner themselves, but were able to give one also to their children and old women.

Mother Margaret thus refers to this little incident in a characteristic letter " We could not help laughing at that part of your letter about turkeys and geese, particularly as both turkeys and geese came tumbling in on Christmas Eve. You would have been amused to have seen the Sisters as each arrived. We concluded that Our Lord was pleased with our keeping the strict abstinence of our rule during Advent, which we have done this year for the first time. Sister Rose thinks our Holy Father must have liked good eating, as we are so well provided each feast-day without taking any trouble about it. It appeared more to us, as we had made up our minds that turkeys were too dear for us to buy. Blessed be Our Lord and His Divine Mother, who take such care of their truly poor ones, even in such little things ! "

As the Sisters were now fairly settled in their new quarters, Mother Margaret was anxious to procure them the blessing of a spiritual Retreat, and negotiations for that purpose were opened with the Passionist Fathers. But the plan was forced to be given up for a time in consequence of her own state of health, which began to cause serious uneasiness. It was evident to all that some change of scene and rest from labour were becoming imperatively necessary. The letters addressed to her at this time by Bishop Ullathorne are full of exhortations to prudence, and from them we gather that her unwillingness to comply with the

urgent advice of her medical adviser arose from the fear of scandalising her Community. "You tell me you are afraid of scandalising a young Community by taking rest or mitigations; you think you must be always working, and will not realise the truth that prudence rules all the virtues." At length, in the January of 1849, all her objections were overruled, and a letter from Bishop Ullathorne placed her under obedience to consult her own health before anything else, and to proceed at once to Malvern, in order to place herself under the care of Dr. Gully. She reluctantly consented, and, leaving Clifton with one companion, reached Worcester in very severe weather, and drove thence to Malvern through deep snow, "much terrified, and praying all the way." They were kindly received by the Rev. Mr Scott, who gave them accommodation in his own house; and such was the severity of the season, that the good Sister who accompanied Mother Margaret could not venture to cross the street to the post-office without the aid of a *pike*. Dr. Gully's report of his patient was hopeful; and Mother Margaret communicated the good news in a letter to her Sisters, adding, however, that the doctor considered she would continue growing *fat*. "It will be a cure for vanity," she writes, "and a punishment for all rash judgments; for I always had a dislike to fat priests and nuns. I have one comfort, however, that there are some fat saints in heaven. St. Thomas Aquinas was very fat, and I think it is the mark of a true Dominican." The real cause of her physical sufferings at this time was that ceaseless activity of mind which gave her no rest, and which was always in a sense consuming her vital powers. Of this we catch a glimpse in a letter written from Malvern in reply to one from his Lordship, in which he urges her to give herself up to the use of proper remedies, and not to torment herself by vague fears of what the world might say of her temporary absence from her Community.[1]

[1] MS. Correspondence, January 10, 1849.

" I can obey you," she says, " in forgetting all that people may say of me ; but my head is continually at work planning and thinking what can be done for the salvation of souls, and to benefit the state of the poor suffering members of Jesus. I pass many sleepless hours in this way, and finish by finding that I am a poor, silly woman, and can do nothing but desire. I have a great difficulty in saying vocal prayers, and cannot keep my attention, not for one Our Father, and yet no other thing occupies my mind but God, and things relating to God. . . . Pray for my complete conversion, and then it will be of little consequence what becomes of this corrupt mass."

A little incident occurred during her visit to Malvern which she was afterwards accustomed to narrate with her wonted simplicity. In the course of conversation with Dr. Gully, she happened to mention to him the existence of a protuberance on the top of her head, which she believed to be a *wen*, and which, under that belief, she had more than once poulticed. Dr. Gully examined the position of the supposed wen, and laughed heartily at the surmise. " You may poultice that bump long enough," he said ; " why, that is your organ of *benevolence !* " He was already in some degree acquainted with the character of his patient, for she had consulted him some years previously when residing at Coventry, and derived great benefit from his water-treatment. A plan was at one time in agitation for establishing a hospital at Malvern for the purpose of affording the poor the benefits of that treatment, and Mother Margaret was solicited to accept its management, but the proposal was never carried into effect.

If we may judge from the tone of her correspondence during this visit to Malvern, the experience of her own failing health was beginning to convince her of the necessity of intervals of rest and solitude for those engaged in active labours. From the time of her return to England she had

scarcely allowed herself a moment's repose ; and, for some time after the foundation of the Community, the ardour of her desires to work for God's glory and the salvation of souls, led her to overtask her own powers, and perhaps even those of others. The limited number of the religious, in the commencement, obliged them all to impose on themselves an amount of labour demanding more than ordinary strength, and Mother Margaret never laid any duties on others in which she did not herself take the principal share. It was a point on which her sagacious superior had never ceased to urge prudence ; and one of his letters, addressed to her when at Malvern, shows the direction in which her energetic nature was tempted to run into excess.

" Believe me," he writes, " it is not against the fact of mere bodily suffering—about which I care very little—that I so often press you on this point. The question is a question of virtue itself. Our Lord took His apostles aside when they were fatigued, and said, ' Let us rest awhile.' He never drove his over-tired faculties. When tired, ' He sat by the well.' He used to go and rest in the house of Martha and Mary after the fatigues of working in Jerusalem. The Scripture shows that it was His custom. He tells us all, you and me, and all, to let to-morrow take care of itself, and merely to meet the evil of the present day. Real foresight consists in reserving our own forces. If we labour with anxiety about the future, we destroy that strength which will enable us to meet the future. If we take more in hand now than we can well do, we break up, and the work is broken up with us.

" There is much self-denial in restraining our disposition to do all we feel prompted to do. It may be a very great act of patience to leave undone what we would like to see done at once. It may be a great act of humility to suffer others about us to see that we are as weak as others in the flesh. The valour of the valiant woman without her prudence is not wisdom. Love for the Order, love for the

Community, love for the poor—well, that is best shown by keeping oneself *able*, not by *dis*abling oneself. So St. Vincent of Paul would tell you. So St. Ignatius would say. So St. Dominic would say, too, I suspect. I wish he were in my place, and not I in his, to say it."

These earnest words of advice were, it must be owned, but partially successful, and to the last her eagerness to spend and be spent for Christ led her to overtask her physical strength. It may be doubted if the activity of her mind were ever capable of being restrained, yet she was fully sensible of the dangers and distractions of an over-active life, and solicitous that her Sisters might be protected from them by a large admixture of spiritual exercises, and frequent intervals of retreat. In one of her letters from Malvern she thus expressed herself: "I feel more and more that those who are employed in great towns should have a place of retreat and rest far from their ordinary occupations, for at least two or three weeks in every year, so as to obtain solitude of heart."

Shortly after her return from Malvern, the Rev. Père Moulaert, whose correspondence with the Community at Coventry has already been mentioned, came over from Belgium on a visit, and rendered further assistance to the religious by his instructions in the rule and ceremonies of the Order. He took a most kind and fraternal interest in the English foundation, and did much to perfect the regular discipline of the house. In order to observe the Sisters when in choir, he would station himself at the little window overlooking the chapel, whence he could watch their proceedings, afterwards correcting any error which he detected in the ceremonies. He taught them when to stand and sit in choir, and introduced the singing of the "*Salve*" and "*O Lumen*" to the proper tones. He likewise gave the religious lessons in the recitation of Latin, and drew up the forms of profession and protestation. His appearance for the first time in his white habit and capuce caused some

excitement among the children and the workmen engaged on the building, who had grown accustomed to the sight of nuns, but were as yet wholly unused to the spectacle of a white-hooded friar.

Father Moulaert left Clifton the first week in April, and before returning to Belgium, addressed a letter to Mother Margaret, congratulating her on the good spirit he had found among the religious, their exactitude in observance, their generous devotion to the service of the poor, and the special devotion manifested by them towards the most Holy Sacrament. He dwelt on the tokens he had observed of that union of heart which he calls "the virtue most necessary for leading a religious Community to the perfection of their state." "What shall I say," he continues, "of their great love for our Holy Order, and for our dear and Holy Father, St. Dominic, and our Holy Mother, St. Catherine of Siena? I can only say that if your Community continues to advance in the same happy path on which it has entered, it must obtain the most signal favours from Heaven, and will, no doubt, ere long spread over all England, for the greater glory of God."

It has already been said that an earnest wish had been expressed by the Rev. Mr. Carpue that he should be assisted by Mother Margaret in his last moments. She was in consequence summoned to Princethorpe, where he had been seized by a stroke of paralysis, and remained with him until his death, which took place on the 25th of April. During her absence the Community received an accession of four members. Two of these were Lucy and Maria Poole, whose vocation has already been spoken of as decided during Bishop Ullathorne's visit to Rome in 1847. The elder of these Sisters had not at first felt attracted to the Dominican Order, and, had her health permitted, would have sought admission into an enclosed Community. It was decided, however, by her advisers that this was impossible, and a little incident which occurred at Rome,

and made a strong impression on her mind, helped to confirm her in the idea she had formed of accompanying her sister to Clifton. One day entering the Trinitarian Church in the Via Condotti, one of the Fathers, with whom she was acquainted, informed her that he was going to the Relic Office, and offered to procure her a relic of her patron saint, St. Lucy. The next day he brought her a little reliquary, and explained that, having been unable to obtain the relic of St. Lucy, he had brought her one instead of St. Dominic. She was well aware of the precarious state of her health, but her desire to die in the religious habit was so great that Mother Margaret could not find it in her heart to refuse her ; and her appearance at that time so little indicated decline, as to give rise to sanguine hopes on the part of some that she might be spared many years to the Community.

Previous to this last addition to their numbers, the religious had been making a Novena to St. Theresa for new subjects, and had specially been praying that some might join them capable of assisting the services of the choir. Their prayers were granted, and on her return home Mother Margaret soon discovered that the Sister who was " to settle the Latin and the music " had been sent to her at last.

The main part of the convent was meanwhile rapidly advancing towards completion, and the religious took possession of it in the month of July. The bell, which had already been solemnly blessed by Bishop Hendren, was suspended in the bell-tower, and the *Angelus* began to sound over Clifton thrice a day. The cloisters connecting the convent with the chapel were begun in the autumn of the same year, and completed through the generous assistance of the Rev. F. Neve ; the staircase communicating with the orphanage being excavated at tremendous risk to the safety of the entire building. Thus by degrees the convent assumed a regular form, and the Community continued at the same time to increase in numbers, which latter circum-

stance, while it rejoiced Mother Margaret's heart, filled her with many anxieties. " My head is tired with thinking," she writes, " and my soul is oppressed with sadness, when I look round and see fifteen souls committed to my care and I without knowledge or ability to guide them. I feel very anxious about their spiritual direction, and wish that more of us were thoroughly formed. I feel the loss of your paternal care more than ever ; so many *white heads*, and, only myself to guide them."

Yet though she sensibly felt the increase of responsibility which came with an increase of numbers, and though what she was accustomed to call the " learning " of some of her new children perplexed her a little, and suggested some naïve comments in her correspondence, she gratefully recognized the hand of God in the fact of members being brought to the Community who were qualified to assist her in the task of its formation and government. " I prayed and prayed," she said, shortly before her death, " and the right people came one after another." The two things which ever lay nearest her heart were the public service of God, and the establishment of strict religious observance. In regard of the first of these points, there was much to be desired ; yet homely as had been their first attempts at choral services, Mother Margaret's grand liturgical sense was always designing better things ; for far before all other duties did she esteem the celebration of the Divine Office and the Ritual of the Church. Hitherto, the Community had been forced to sing without accompaniment for want of an organ and a musician to play it. Both these deficiencies were now supplied. Not only did the Community become possessed of an organ, but it was further discovered that one of the postulants was possessed of sufficient musical ability to undertake the office of organist. The first day when, in spite of a disabled hand, she succeeded in getting through the Benediction Service, Mother Margaret could not restrain her delight. The performance,

if we are to credit the account of the musician herself, was far from splendid ; but when the service was over, she was called into Mother Margaret's room to hear the expressions of her pleasure ; " only," she added, taking the lame hand in hers, and tenderly kissing it, " I fear you have suffered for my gratification." Many years later she referred to this little incident, when speaking of all the consolations she had at different times received in being suffered to work for God. " He has gratified me in everything," she said ; " little by little, everything I have wished to do for Him has come about. I could not put into words what I felt when I saw the arches of the church at Stone rising and then the consecration of the two altars ; and before that, the first time we had an organ played by one of our own sisters, I was so delighted. How good God is ! "

The development which the Community was now taking promised also to facilitate the execution of one great work, the necessity of which was daily becoming more apparent. This was the compilation, in English, of Constitutions drawn from those of the first and second Orders, and adapted to the use of the Community. This important undertaking had engaged Mother Margaret's attention so early as 1847, for in the July of that year we find her writing on the subject to the Provincial, Father Procter, who says, in his reply, " I see no obstacle to your using the second Rule, and adapting it to your own circumstances. You are certainly at liberty to do all that the General permits." But the carrying out of this design required a close and intelligent study of many authorities, as well as a familiar acquaintance with the languages in which these authorities were alone to be found. Though Mother Margaret had clearly in her mind the general outline of such a compilation, its actual production demanded an amount of literary skill which the Community had not hitherto had at its command. Now, however, the time seemed come for beginning a work, the importance of which could not be

over-estimated, for it was to furnish the mould into which the whole Institute should hereafter be shaped. Communities of Tertiaries engaged in active work had recently been established in France, and with a view of obtaining some information as to the plan they had adopted, a correspondence was opened with the Dominican nuns at Langres, who kindly sent a manuscript copy of their Constitutions. This correspondence was begun in consequence of a letter received from the Rev. Père Lacordaire, in reply to one addressed to him from Clifton. His own letter will be read with interest :—

" PARIS, *23rd November*, 1849.

" VERY REVEREND MOTHER,—I have learnt with joy from a letter of Sister Columba's, written in your name, that you have established a convent of our Order in England, which is flourishing, and openly protected by the Bishop of the district in which it is placed. This news has inspired me with great sentiments of gratitude to God, who seems, in these difficult times, to wish greatly to extend our holy Order. Ten years ago we had only four or five convents of Dominican nuns in France ; since that time, establishments have been made at Bar-le-Duc, at Neufchateau, at Châlons-sur-Saone, at Toulouse, and at Carcassonne ; and we have ourselves founded four, at Nancy, at Chalais near Grenoble, at Flavigny, and at Paris. Divine Providence is opening ways for us on all sides, and will doubtless inspire us with the sentiments and works by which we are to correspond with its designs.

" Dominican nuns in France are of two kinds : some follow the Constitutions of the great Order ; others follow the Constitutions of the Third Order, with the addition of the vows and the rules relating to elections and administration. Our Sisters at Langres, in the department of Haute-Marne, have, in concert with us, drawn up regulations for their house, the knowledge of which might be

useful to you. By putting yourself into communication with them, they will let you have a copy of these regulations, which are destined to blend together the First and Third Orders; for they are of the Third Order and enclosed.

"I do not think that the absence of enclosure with you is an obstacle; it seems to me very useful for the realisation of the good work confided to you in England.

"I think also that it will be well for you to take advantage of the General Chapter of our Order, which will open at Naples on the 17th of next May, to have your rules approved. I have received a summons to the Chapter; and, unless anything unforeseen occurs, I intend to go to it, and there to ask for the definite erection of the French Province, for it is not as yet canonically erected.

"As to paying you a visit at Bristol, very Reverend Mother, it would doubtless be a consolation to me to see you and to converse with you; but my whole winter is rigorously occupied with labours of all kinds; and, immediately after Easter, it is my intention to set out for Rome and Naples. I do not therefore at present see my way to procuring myself this satisfaction.

"Very Reverend Mother, please to recommend me and all our brethren to the prayers of your dear Community. I am ready to second you in all that is in my power; and I hope that, on your part, you will intercede with God on our behalf.—I am, with respect, very Reverend Mother, your very humble and very obedient servant in our Lord,

BROTHER HENRY-DOMINIC LACORDAIRE,
Of the Friar-Preachers.
RUE DE VAUGIRARD, No. 70."

This year was marked by the commencement or renewal of fraternal intercourse with several branches of the Order, both in Belgium and Ireland. An application from the Provincial of Ireland, Father B. Russell, for prayers in aid

of an important undertaking, led to a correspondence, in the course of which Mother Margaret communicated to him some of her ideas regarding the future government of her Communities, and specially that of establishing one general Novitiate. "We hope," she writes, "that you will spend a few days with us to talk over the affairs of our much-loved and venerated Order. God and our Immaculate Mother Mary have done great things for us, but there is much to be thought of, and much to be done, before we are all right. We have everything in our Order that can be conducive to the salvation of souls, and the relief of the poor suffering members of Jesus: all that the new Orders can do we have in ours, and much, very much more. It is only to co-operate, with our united prayers and means, to bring our Holy Order out in its full vigour and splendour. We hear frequently from our Fathers in Belgium. Yesterday we had a letter, in which they tell us they intend to have but one Novitiate for France and Belgium; and they have sent three of theirs to be under Père Lacordaire. This we think a very great blessing, as all will have the same spirit, and the same unity of sentiment. God in His mercy is again reviving our Order. May it be for His greater glory, and the salvation of souls. We hope to have one general Novitiate in England for *this* branch of the Order. We feel sure it is the best, and will give a great unity of spirit to all its members. We have had a very kind letter from Father Lacordaire. He is doing much in France. Providence, I hope, will give me an opportunity of seeing my Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters in Ireland." The proposal thus alluded to received Father Russell's hearty approval. "Your idea of forming one Novitiate is an excellent one," he replies. "The Sisters of Charity in Ireland have adopted the same plan, and it has worked well, producing a most perfect union of action and feeling in the different Communities scattered through the country. I am glad to hear that you are in occasional

correspondence with our good Fathers of France and Belgium. The more interchange there is of sentiments between the dispersed members of the same religious family, the more chance there will be that the spirit of our Blessed Founder will be kept alive among us in this degenerate age. Though a stranger to you, I have felt no ordinary interest in your foundation, ever since the first intimation of the introduction of the Third Order into England, as a religious Community with a conventual residence, appeared in the *Tablet*. You will not be surprised at this fraternal sympathy with your holy zeal, when I tell you that I am mastered by one strong passion—a devoted love of my Order, and anxiety for its restoration in these countries, with its ancient spirit animating its three families. For that end, we must all pray and work perseveringly and disinterestedly."

These words appealed to what might with equal truth have been called the master-passion of her to whom they were addressed. " How happy we are," she writes about this time, " in having such holy Fathers ! Let the world say what it will, it cannot rob us of our Fathers, or make us anything but daughters of St. Dominic ! I cannot imagine how one so undeserving as myself has had that blessing of blessings, to be a Dominican." She heard of the approaching assembly of the Chapter-General of the Order with singular emotion. " The Chapter-General is to meet at Naples," she writes. " I feel so pleased that there is to be a Chapter, though I don't know why."

It had been a year of internal development, and promised to be followed by one of external expansion. Many proposals were received for establishing the Sisters in various parts of England ; and at one time the liberal offer made by the Dominican Fathers of resigning to the Community the chapel and land occupied by them at Chilvers Coton, about five miles from Hinckley, appeared to point out this spot as the probable site of the future

Novitiate which Mother Margaret purposed locating in the Midland District. Coton was in the immediate neighbourhood of Weston Hall, where Mr. De Bary had now fixed his residence, and it was at no great distance from Coventry. Visitors from Coventry, and especially from Foleshill, the scene of Mother Margaret's early labours, often found their way to Weston, where they were wont to relate the incidents of her life among them, which were still fresh in their affectionate memory. Nor had she on her part forgotten them; and when the cholera broke out in Coventry during the September of 1849, she was only prevented by obedience from hastening to their assistance. The tidings reached her that numbers were dead or dying, that the town was in consternation, and that in their distress the people were asking for the Sisters. "It made me long to fly to them," she wrote; "but Mr. Neve would not consent. I have sent two of the Sisters to do what they can for these poor people. I hope, if the people wish it, and it would revive their spirits, you will let me go to them."

Many causes, therefore, combined, as it seemed, to attract her to Coton, whilst, at the same time, her desire daily increased to fix the Novitiate House in some more retired spot than Clifton. "I think," she says, in her correspondence with Bishop Ullathorne, "that were you now with us, you would judge it quite necessary that we should have a place where there is not much work, that we may be able to train the novices to a more spiritual life, and that they may have time to learn the Rule, Constitutions, and Office. As it is, they are set to work directly, and have not time to be trained; always giving out, and taking nothing in, which in time would be the destruction of all spirituality. If you make them truly spiritual, they will become fit instruments in God's hands to work for His glory." Her idea of the Central Novitiate was that it should be the model-house of the Institute, and she there-

fore desired that, whilst enjoying the advantage of a retired situation, it should include every institution of charity which could be carried on within its own enclosure. "I should like," she says, "to have it built so that every branch of charity could be practised in it; particularly a hospital, that it may be a model to the rest." Her notion of spirituality, and even of retirement, never excluded the idea of *labour;* and whilst desirous to train the younger members of her Community apart from the distractions of a worldly neighbourhood, and an over-busy life, she always regarded *work* as one of the main instruments of spiritual formation. She often loved to quote the words of St. John of the Cross, "Work, suffer, and be silent," as embodying the essentials of religious life. It is thus she expresses herself on the subject at this very time: "It is no use persons coming to us who are not willing to suffer everything for the salvation of souls. They must have a heroic spirit, and be ready to bear heat, cold, fatigue, and every other inconvenience. It is easier to *say* that we delight in mean and abject employments, than it is to do them. We have had experience of this, and all would prefer to wear a hair shirt or a chain, than to clean the kitchen, wash, iron, or cook; though God has commanded all to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow. This is quite lost sight of, and is almost looked upon as a disgrace. Yet it is certain that Our Lord, in working as a carpenter, must have fulfilled the command, and Our Blessed Lady had no servants to wait on her. The more I see of human nature, the more I feel certain that humble and laborious employments are the best mortification, the shortest way to obtain true humility, and to make us have a proper feeling of charity towards the laborious and the poor. We can ill give lessons to others of things we have not ourselves experienced."

Her practice was in exact accordance with this teaching; and she always showed a certain suspicion of the vocation

of those who made a supposed attraction for prayer and recollection stand in the way of a cheerful application to humble labour. To a Novice-Mistress, who was in doubt as to the vocation of one such subject, she gave the following brief direction: "It is not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, who is fit for the kingdom of heaven; she will be put into the kitchen, that will try her best," the said kitchen being at that time a sad cross to all concerned, in consequence of its incurable smokiness. "Put solid Christianity in, and take the nonsense out," was another pithy instruction given under somewhat similar circumstances; and in one of her letters she prescribes as the best remedy for a spirit of murmuring, "active duties joined to an interior mortified life, without which we are not religious, but only whited sepulchres."

She desired, therefore, that the Novitiate House should be a school of mortification and the interior life; but, at the same time, that all such charitable institutions should be annexed to it as would give the novices an opportunity of becoming practically trained in those heroic duties in the service of their neighbour which formed so essential a part of the life they aspired to embrace.

The year closed in the midst of these hopes and projects for the future. "We are going to make a great *fuss* with Our Blessed Mother," she wrote, as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception drew near, "and we hope she will do something for us during her Octave. We want an orphanage and a hospital." Humiliations and crosses, however, were mingled with these hopes. The busy tongue of gossip did not spare the rising Institute, and all the world did not understand the principles that guided Mother Margaret's conduct. What most perplexed the curious public was her lavish expenditure on all that concerned the service of God, at a time when they had good reasons for believing that the Community was enduring many of the straits of poverty. They argued, that if Mother Margaret

were really in want of money, it was strange that she should burn so many candles in the chapel ; and they never dreamt that at the very time when remarks of this kind were in circulation she was writing to her Sisters on the subject of their money difficulties, " Do not burn one candle less in honour of Our Lord, or His Blessed Mother ; we must be sparing to ourselves, but not to God." Yet she was far from being indifferent to hostile criticism ; we might even say that she was at all times keenly sensitive to unfriendly strictures which betrayed a less generous standard of principles than her own.

" I cannot explain the state of my soul at present," she writes ; " I feel I have much to do for God, and I wish to do it, and I have at the same time such a desire of solitude that I would run into any obscure place to be alone with God. There are so many remarks made about our active duties ; some think that what we do is to get a name ; and when we decorate our little chapel there are also unkind remarks. I can say, with truth, I have not the least sensible satisfaction in these things. For before a feast the body is very weary, and the soul very depressed, seeing that when we have done our best we have done nothing for so great, so good a God. I have more feelings of discontent than anything else. Indeed, when I see least I see most, and in seeing nothing I see all things. Whatever exterior works we do I hope it is purely for the glory of God and the salvation of souls."

One of the pieces of floating gossip which at this time caused her no little pain, bore reference to a doubt suggested in certain quarters as to the claims of the Conventual Tertiaries to be regarded as true *religious*. The critics, indeed, somewhat resembled those in the fable, of whom some advised that the ass should carry his master, whilst others counselled the master to carry his ass.

For the difficulties raised were of most opposite kinds. Whilst one person, a total stranger to the Community, and

himself the *ex*-member of a religious order, presented himself at the convent door, and endeavoured to persuade the portress who opened to him that she had no right to wear the religious habit ; others were of opinion that the Sisters, if they desired to be thought religious at all, should be strictly enclosed. Mother Margaret, who possibly overestimated the weight of these remarks, hastened to assure her superiors that, if enclosure were a necessary condition to the religious character, neither she nor any of her Sisters would hesitate to accept it. But she was speedily reassured on this head, and a letter from F. Procter, the Provincial, dated in this year, disposes in a very summary way of both classes of objections.

" We are of opinion," he writes, " that you are *not* bound to enclosure, and that you had better go on as you are. . . . The Bishop tells me that he explained everything respecting your position in England to the Pope, to Propaganda, and to the General, who all approved ; so there can be no doubt that you are true religious *to all intents and purposes*."

In an earlier letter, dated October 17, 1846, he enumerates the different kinds of Dominican Tertiaries, distinguishing seculars living in their own houses, and those gathered in congregations, but not bound to Community-life, from those who take the three essential vows of religion and live in community. " This latter class," he says, " are *truly conventuals and real religious ;* and I look upon yourself and your Community as belonging to this class." Considering the formal approbation given to the Institute at a later period by the Holy See, and its strict dependence on the Master-General of the Order, it is a little curious that these early reports should ever have been revived, and that from time to time persons were found to deny that Mother Margaret and her religious were real Dominicans. The rumours sprang, probably, partly out of the existence of different classes of Tertiaries, and partly from the familiar

way in which people accustomed themselves to speak of "Mother Margaret's Nuns"; whence the idea suggested itself to those who were not better informed, that the Institute she governed was a novelty in the Church, originating with herself. In whatever way such rumours arose, they were deeply wounding to one whose loyal devotion to her Order was second only to her devotion to the Church. "The feeling I have of belonging to the Order," she writes, "has been implanted there by God, deep down in the very depths of my soul; so that when I hear it said I am not to belong to it, I could sit down and do no more in any way, but feel much more inclined to leave England, and to be either enclosed or to live by begging in some Catholic country. This is not the thought of a day, nor is it any affection for any individual belonging to the Order, but it was innate in my soul for many years before I came to England, and not seeking the Order in any way, so that it must have been put there by God. I did not choose the Dominican Order, but Our Lord, in His mercy and for His own wise reasons, forced me into it; and I have reason to bless Him for it."

Another cross, which touched her at this time more sensibly than the criticisms of the world, was the failing health of Sister Mary Columba, one of the recently-clothed novices, whose powerful character and varied gifts promised to make her a valuable member of the Community. Mother Margaret had reckoned on her restoration to health with sanguine hopes, which soon proved fallacious. In spite of continual spitting of blood, and other unmistakable symptoms of consumption, she had given herself with fervour to all the duties which her feeble health allowed of. Unable to take a part in more active labours, she exerted herself in teaching the younger novices, and in translating portions of the French Constitutions, and other works of interest to the Community. "When not so employed," writes her Novice-Mistress, "she was generally to be found before

the Blessed Sacrament, in which she found her delight." When in the world, she had been accustomed to very frequent Communions, and the loss of this privilege proved her only cross in religion. It was one she felt the more from the fact of her being often unable, from illness, to communicate on the ordinary days; and her sister, who knew how painfully she felt this deprivation, would sometimes beg an extra Communion for her. She experienced at all times a great sensible sweetness in communicating, and was accustomed to call on heaven and earth to join with her in jubilee when making her thanksgiving. The perfect happiness which she found in religious life was the more remarkable considering her strong attachment to home. When in the world, she had never been able to make herself happy away from her own family; yet, in spite of this ardent natural feeling, she never suffered from a day's depression after entering the convent. And when Mother Margaret once expressed her fear lest in her weak state she should feel the want of home comforts, she replied cheerfully, "Have no fears on that score, dear Mother; I assure you I have again and again kissed the very walls of the convent." An attack of inflammation, brought on by cold, increased her unfavourable symptoms, and on the first day of the New Year, 1850, she took to her bed, from which she never rose again.

CHAPTER VII

1850-1852

ON the 3rd of January, Sister Mary Columba's state appeared so alarming that it was determined to give her the last Sacraments, after which she made her profession, as is permitted to novices at the hour of death, even if they have not completed the full year of probation. She rallied, however, after receiving the Sacraments, and survived until the 24th of April, on which day she expired, having been in the Convent precisely a year and a day. Many prayers were offered during this time for her recovery, for Mother Margaret loved her much, and greatly prized the solidity of her judgment. One day she told her, in her simple way, that she really must not die, for that she wanted her to put in order all the accounts and business matters of the convent. "If that is all, dear Mother," said the invalid, "bring me the accounts here, and I will do whatever you want; but don't keep me in the world any longer." Her last words were, "My heart is ready, O Lord! my heart is ready!" Those who were present describe the look of wonder, admiration, and awe, which appeared on her countenance as she breathed her last. She was buried in the little cemetery attached to the convent, being the first of those who had departed who found a resting-place among their own religious Sisters. The birds were remarked singing sweetly during the whole time of the funeral ceremony.

Meanwhile, plans had been formed for establishing a filiation at Bridgwater, in Somersetshire; whilst at the same time, the earlier project of founding in the Midland District was not laid aside. About Easter, Mother Margaret proceeded with one companion to Staffordshire, for the purpose of examining some of the localities proposed for this latter foundation. She visited Hinckley and Longton, and paid a short visit to St. Benedict's Priory, where, for the first time, she became personally acquainted with the venerable Mother Prioress. She also visited Weston Hall, where the zeal and piety of Mr. and Mrs. De Bary were producing some remarkable results. The intimate relations which existed between Mother Margaret and her saintly friends will justify us in saying a few words regarding them and their work at Weston. Both Mr. and Mrs. De Bary were professed Franciscan Tertiaries, and from the period of their conversion to the Catholic faith they gave themselves up to the service of God with the entire devotion of religious. Mrs. De Bary may be said to have lived for the poor people around her, and by her holy example effected the conversion of many. She more than once visited the convent at Clifton; and a letter from one of the Dominican Fathers describes how, on her return from one of these visits, she was met at the Bulkington station, not by a carriage and servants, but by a crowd "of the poor rough young souls, boys and girls, who are so fondly attached to her, and who showed their honest delight at seeing her again. How much," he continues, "one person can do with earnestness and quiet persevering zeal, when acting from the pure love of God! It is evidently the work of God that those poor things, who, a few months ago, were like mere children of nature, should now show themselves so apt for putting on the true Christian character. In some of their little ways it is amusing to see how like they are to old Catholics. It only shows how much might be done with the corresponding class of persons all over

the country, if there were but some to care for them, and be devoted to the cultivation of their souls."

The owners of Weston Hall lived there in a certain style of holy and primitive simplicity. A room in the upper part of the house was arranged as a chapel for the use of the mission, which was served by one of the Dominican Fathers from Hinckley ; whilst the great hall was converted into a poor-school which Mrs. De Bary taught herself. " It is a beautiful sight," says the same writer just quoted, " to see her in the midst of her scholars, big and little, girls and boys ; some of them great fellows eighteen or nineteen years old, but all as humble and docile as children, gathered in the large square old hall of the house, which I promise you is not quite as silent as a Trappist cloister. I only hope she will not injure her health by overwork." There was an odour of antique piety about the whole establishment which charmed Mother Margaret's heart ; and she often described her delight in seeing the crowds of country people who gathered there on Sundays, their hob-nailed boots making free with the oak staircase, and all their voices heartily united in singing the plain-chant Mass. For one of the striking features of the Weston congregation was, that they all learnt to sing. Perhaps it was not the least powerful of the means which were used for awakening within them the religious sense, and attaching them to the services of the Church. On certain days men and women, boys and girls, assembled in the hall to practise under the direction of one of the Fathers, Mr and Mrs. De Bary, and all their household, likewise assisting. It was in the midst of one of these weekly singing-meetings that Mother Margaret arrived on occasion of her first visit, in company with Bishop Ullathorne. The unexpected sight of his Lordship, and of Mother Margaret, whose name had been made familiar to them by their Coventry friends, struck a sort of awe into the little assembly, all of whom were recent converts, unused to the spectacle of bishops

or nuns. But they soon learnt to be quite as much at home with Mother Margaret as she was with them. She was edified by their simple manners, their singular piety in chapel, and by their hearty singing of the Mass, and specially of the plain-chant *Credo*, which, she said, " was like a living act of faith." After that time she frequently visited Weston Hall in the course of her journeys to and from Staffordshire, and always met with the same affectionate welcome. Once a little debate arose between her friends as to the proper manner of addressing her. Mrs. De Bary considered that " Mother Margaret " was too familiar a title, and that she ought to be addressed as " Mother Prioress " ; whilst her husband insisted on it, that he had always been used to call her " Mother Margaret," that everyone did so, and that he was convinced she liked it best. The knotty point was reserved for her own decision, and settled by her saying, in that hearty tone which must have been heard to be described, " You may call me *Mother Peggy* if you like." One day she told them she was going to ask Our Lady for a particular favour. " And suppose she does not grant it ? " inquired Mr. De Bary, " Oh," was the reply, " I shall tease her till she does."

" Everyone in the house," writes one who formed her first acquaintance with Mother Margaret in the course of these visits, " seemed to feel the joy of her presence, and the people would stop and linger about the house to catch a sight of her. Mrs. De Bary's affection for her was that of a child for a mother. In her last sickness, when so ill that all other letters had to be read to her, she would always read Mother Margaret's letters herself, and her greatest pleasure was to talk about her. I well remember her last attempt to write to her ; it was the last time she ever sat upright."

To complete this little sketch we must add one extract from a letter addressed by Mother Margaret to her friend,

who leant much on her advice ; from which it will be seen that the secret attraction of her pure and holy soul was to a life of prayer, and that her heroic devotion to the active works of charity was in part the result of Mother Margaret's counsels. " All devotion," she writes, " that does not make us more active in the duties of our state is a delusion. God Himself is order, and all His works are orderly. Believe me, my dear Sister, you are called to work much for God, and that love is deceitful which would not work and suffer for the object beloved. No doubt your husband and children, next to God, are your first care, your indoor servants next, and all those over whom God has given you authority. You will not lose the spirit and relish of prayer by this ; it will increase, and you will find in action what you have been looking for in rest."

In her other letters she expresses herself with the same affectionate freedom, and pours forth her devouring passion for the salvation of souls. " Pray for us," she writes, " that we may have the true spirit of Our Holy Father, and our Seraphic Mother, and that we may not think of rest or ease till there are no more souls to be saved. We had a *parson*, a near relative, to see our sick Sister yesterday. Don't be scandalized if I say I made myself as agreeable as I could. Oh, that I could save all ! "

Nothing definite regarding the Staffordshire foundation was decided at this time ; and it was arranged that the filiation at Bridgwater should first be tried. As usual, Mother Margaret had to pass through a crucible of interior suffering before beginning this new undertaking. " I am more depressed than I can express this last week," she writes, in a letter alluding to the preparations that were in hand ; " I see only the naked cross, without anything to support nature. I am glad to be alone, to give vent to what I feel. Make me a saint, my dear Father, cost what it will ! I never have, nor do I expect, rest in this world ; but, with your help, I hope to get eternal rest. Ask the Holy

Ghost for me, my dear Father, that I may only think, speak, and act by the influence of that Divine Spirit."

Whilst still engaged in preparing for the new foundation, the Community was alarmed by the sudden breaking out of a most pestilential and infectious fever among the children who boarded in the convent. On Friday, the 15th of May, two were seized with it, and on the day following both died. It was a distressing affliction. "When I saw M. A. dying," wrote Mother Margaret, "all my sins rushed to my mind." Owing to the malignant character of the disease, the medical men in attendance directed that the funeral should take place on the second day, and this gave rise to many suspicious and injurious remarks. Some asserted that homœopathic treatment had been the cause of death; others reproduced one of those time-honoured romances so popular with an English public when a convent is in question, and boldly declared that the children had been "made away with." A Protestant clergyman suggested, as another alternative, that they had probably been rendered so unhappy by the ill-treatment of the nuns as to have been driven to "make away" with themselves. There was a great talk of exhuming the bodies, and holding a coroner's inquest; but this was happily prevented by the firmness of the medical man, who represented to the authorities that such a proceeding would probably result in spreading the deadly pestilence. The appearance of several cases of a similar kind in the immediate neighbourhood allayed the excitement, and satisfied most persons that the deaths of the two children were to be attributed to a natural cause; and fortunately the fever did not extend to any other inmates of the convent.

During the Octave of Corpus Christi this year the Devotion of the Forty Hours was for the first time celebrated in St. Catherine's Convent, closing, on the 7th of June, with a procession of the Most Holy Sacrament through the cloisters and garden. "We are to finish," writes Mother

Margaret, " with a grand procession of Our Lord and God —as grand, that is, as I can make it, although not as I could wish." The devotion in question was at this time, comparatively speaking, rare in England,[1] and the interest with which the memory of its first celebration among them was cherished in the Community must be our excuse for inserting the following quotation from a letter of one of the religious, who gives a graphic sketch of the closing procession :—

" There were five Benedictions," she says, " four in the cloisters and the garden and the last in the chapel. The procession was beautiful ; first went little E. H., with his bell round his neck, then the cross-bearer, followed by fifteen couples of girls (representing the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary), five in blue sashes, five in purple, and five in red, each division headed by its own banner. After the children came thirty ladies in black veils, bearing lights ; after them the religious, and then two white banners, and the flower-strewers immediately before the Blessed Sacrament. It was really a beautiful sight, and many persons

[1] In the year 1848 the Devotion of the Forty Hours was sufficiently rare in England to enable a correspondent in the *Rambler*, when taking part in the famous controversy on rood-screens, to speak of it as " essentially, if not exclusively, an *Italian* service. It is one," he continues," *which has not been, and I do not think it at all likely to be, introduced into this country.*" This assertion was far from being strictly accurate, for the very week after the letter of " Q." appeared in the *Rambler*, the same journal contained an advertisement of the Devotion of the Forty Hours to be celebrated at St. George's, Southwark, concluding on the Octave Day of the Assumption. (See *Rambler* for August 12 and 19, 1848.) But that it was still *rare*, even at a later date is proved by the unimpeachable authority of Cardinal, then Bishop Wiseman, who, in his beautiful Lenten Indult of 1849, after announcing to the faithful of the diocese the institution of the Forty Hours in the London churches throughout Lent, observes, that " *as this devotion is as yet but little known in this country*," he will proceed to explain its history and object. When application was made for permission to celebrate the devotion at St. Catherine's, in 1850, some persons expressed surprise, and inquired what extraordinary occasion or necessity there was to justify so unusual a proceeding. The encouragement given to it in the London District, however, soon produced its effect, and after this time the celebration of the Forty Hours became everywhere much more frequent.

could not restrain their tears. We were afraid it would be bad weather, for early in the morning the rain fell in torrents; but we told Our Lord we were sure He only meant to wash every place quite clean, and so it proved, for the weather became quite beautiful. The cloisters, the altar, and garden were profusely decorated with flowers, lights, and banners, and everything that our dear Mother could think of was done to express our joy and devotion. Even dear Sister Columba appeared to express a silent kind of joy, for her grave was covered with flowers." Occasions of this sort were the red letter days of Mother Margaret's calendar. She regarded the celebration of the devotions of the Church as the most effectual means for instilling *faith* into the hearts of the people. Hence in the previous Lent her heart had been gladdened by the first public performance of the Stations of the Cross in the convent cloisters. Through want of proper management on that occasion, the procession was led the wrong way, and a good deal of confusion was the result. Mother Margaret, however, could see no defects; it was a step towards the establishment of a popular Catholic devotion, and her heart was in jubilee. With a similar feeling did she rejoice over the Christmas Crib, erected in the cloisters for the first time in 1849, and visited by the people after the midnight Mass. It was made out of such poor materials as the ingenuity of the Sisters could adapt to the purpose, but it was the first that had ever been seen in Bristol, and, poor as it was, it excited the admiration and devotion of the people. But Mother Margaret's joy at this first celebration of the Quarant' Ore exceeded her other joys, as much as her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament surpassed all her other devotions. It was a joy that was renewed year after year on similar occasions, and one which drew from her lips and her pen the most fervent expressions of her love for "Our God with us."

While making some of the preparations for the proces-

sion on Corpus Christi, Sister M. Teresa Williams fell from a ladder and sprained her ankle so severely as to be unable to walk for several weeks, and the doctor pronounced the joint to be seriously injured. The following day, Mother Margaret was obliged to depart for Bridgwater, and whilst there she received intelligence that the injured foot had been suddenly and entirely restored. The Sister had received Holy Communion in the morning, and the day being Sunday, she contrived, with the help of a stick, to hobble into the library, a room overlooking the cathedral, whence it was quite easy to follow the High Mass. As she was praying, she suddenly became aware of an extraordinary sensation in her leg and foot, accompanied with a great desire to move it and try to walk, though the effort had hitherto been most painful. On making the attempt she found, to her surprise and joy, that she was able to walk as well as she had done before the accident. One of the Dominican Fathers, V. Rev. Father Aylward, who was staying in the convent, was sent for, and when he saw her planting her foot firmly on the ground and betraying no signs of pain, he considered the cure so extraordinary that, assembling the Community in the chapel, he sang with them a Te Deum in thanksgiving. It was on the same day, and at the same hour, that the first Mass was being said in the chapel at Bridgwater, and some of the Sisters remarked the coincidence, adding, " No doubt our Mother has been praying for her at Bridgwater." Such proved to have been indeed the case, and one of her companions at Bridgwater gives the following account of what there took place. " I was with our dear Mother at Bridgwater," she writes, " and observed the sadness and fear which weighed upon her all that Sunday. She spoke little and prayed much all day. When Monday's post brought her the news of S. M. T.'s sudden cure, she burst out into joyful thanksgiving, with her usual exclamation, " How good God is ! I prayed so earnestly for her at the Mass,

and begged of Him, if this foundation was pleasing in His sight, to restore her to health. I told Him that losing her was like losing four, and that I could not do His work if He took from me my best helper. How good He is! How good He is!" But after this first burst of feeling she became more reserved on the subject, especially after receiving letters from Clifton, in which she seemed to detect a tone of elation. She was quite displeased, and sent strict orders that the subject was not to be mentioned."

This narrative would be imperfect without adding some extracts from Mother Margaret's letters to the invalid. A few days previous to her recovery she had written as follows:—"Have courage and be not impatient that Our Lord has given you a rest. I cannot say I am sorry, for when in health you scarcely give yourself time to perform your most essential duties, which are prayer, the Office, and all religious exercises. Lay in a good stock now, for you will want it all later, and be not anxious; our good God always does what is best. And if it be His will that you should lose the use of one leg for a time, rejoice, for God's will is the summit of all perfection; and as He is pleased to let you have but the use of one leg, do you be pleased also." When the news came of the Sister's sudden cure, Mother Margaret wrote again, and whatever she may have thought of the favour received, her first solicitude was to guard against any chance of spiritual elation. "You have much to be grateful for to Our Divine Lord," she says, "but still more to humble you; for if you do not feel a greater sense of your own unworthiness, it is a mere delusion, and will be followed by some great humiliation. Your very excitable nature is something the devil likes to play with, and, remember, it is not any word or work of your own that has obtained this, but God's great goodness and mercy, seeing how few there are to accomplish His work. Be humble and thankful, and forget what has happened, except between you and God."

The fear of elation, whether in herself or others, was one of the most prominent features in Mother Margaret's character. Those who knew her will recall the extreme dread she always testified of any token, however small, of such a spirit. It mattered little in what way it was betrayed, whether it was elation at the success of active work, or complacency at times of interior consolation, it was equally, in her judgment, the work of the enemy, and nothing was surer to bring on the soul in which she detected it a prompt humiliation. The fatherly providence of God protected her own soul from this danger by supplying her, throughout the whole of her extraordinary career, with the salutary and ever-recurring checks of physical and mental suffering. Never, as we have already said, did she endure more from these causes than when beginning her greatest works. Whilst the world marvelled at what she was doing, and talked of her *success*, she was herself invariably plunged in fear and darkness, and the ardour of her strong nature was being curbed and mortified by exhausting sufferings of which the world knew nothing. She well understood this discipline of God as being designed to guard her against the attacks of that weakness which she so greatly dreaded. Hence her views on the subject were experimental, and in the spiritual direction of others she constantly acted on them, until it became a maxim among her children, that anyone who should be led in extraordinary ways must expect to be roughly dealt with by our Mother.

The Bridgwater foundation was dedicated to Our Lady of Good Counsel, a beautiful picture bearing that title, by the German artist Seitz, which had been indulgenced by the Sovereign Pontiff, having been presented for the chapel of the new convent by Spencer Northcote, Esq. It may be said to have been opened on the Sunday when the above incident took place, which was the first Sunday in July. The religious continued there only until the April

of 1851, when the difficulties which arose in the way of their making a permanent establishment in the town, added to the necessity of providing for the more important foundation in Staffordshire, obliged them to withdraw. During the whole time of their residence at Bridgwater they continued to receive most liberal assistance from the Franciscan Community at Taunton, who were their near neighbours, and frequently supplied their Dominican Sisters with provisions. For several years they continued to send a yearly present to St. Catherine's Convent, which came to be denominated "*St. Elizabeth's box*." Its contents one year deserve to be recorded. They consisted of vegetables, which had been ingeniously put together so as to form a figure. The body was formed of turnips, the arms and legs of carrots, the head was another turnip, and in the place of eyes were inserted two gold sovereigns. When the Bridgwater foundation was finally broken up, the picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel was removed to Clifton, where it was placed over Our Lady's altar in the convent chapel. This was now undergoing some important alterations. Hitherto the stalls of the religious had occupied the body of the chapel, and their position was consequently very exposed. It was now proposed to convert into an upstairs choir that portion of the house which projected into the chapel, at the same time raising the roof and enlarging the sanctuary. "I first remember the Clifton chapel in the July of 1850," writes MotherFrancis Raphael herself, whose introduction to the Community took place just after her reception into the Church. "The nuns then had their choir downstairs; the sanctuary was not yet built; the roof was low, and everything was as plain as could be. Yet I remember thinking it had a devout appearance. Some of the carved wooden figures from Belgium, afterwards in the convent cloisters, were in the chapel. It was a Saturday morning, and I well remember seeing a religious in a black habit, with blue apron and sleeves,

busy sweeping. I had just come from a visit at one of the old established convents in the south of England, and had carried away with me the vivid and pictorial impressions of a recent convert. Their deeply devotional choir, and the singular beauty of their chant, was fresh in my memory, and the aspect of the Clifton convent struck me with a sense of contrast, yet of a contrast that was far from being *painful*. It impressed me with an idea of severe simplicity and humble labour: the two images pictured themselves in my soul as representations of the contemplative and of the active life." The black habit here spoken of was an expiring relic of the first stage of their foundation, out of which the Community were fast emerging, and on feast-days it was already exchanged for the white habit of the Order. The writer of the above reminiscences likewise chronicles a visit to the convent habit-room, where these same white habits were displayed for her admiration, and a hope was expressed by Sister Mary Imelda Poole, then on the eve of her profession, that ere long they would be worn to the perpetual exclusion of the black. Two years later she had herself the happiness of receiving the white habit of St. Dominic, which by that time had entirely banished its ignoble substitute.

In the month of September the chapel was closed, and the proposed alterations were begun, under the direction of Mr. C. Hansom, two wings of the cloister being used as a temporary choir and church. It was a memorable year, both to the Community and to the world at large. The establishment of the Catholic hierarchy had set all England in a ferment, and Mother Margaret was founding her first filiation, and preparing for a second, in the midst of the clamour and excitement which rendered the position of Catholics at that time a painful one. She could not be indifferent to the state of public affairs, and, indeed, at all times the sufferings of the Church were her own. "Oh, God's Church!" she writes, "I cannot say how these things

weigh on my weak mind." Solemn Novenas were offered for the peace of the Church, for the Pope, and the Bishops. No one at that moment knew precisely what to expect, but there were grave rumours that measures were in contemplation on the part of the Government against the religious Orders. In the midst of these anxieties an accidental circumstance served to intensify Mother Margaret's feelings regarding the spiritual destitution of England, and to fan the flame of her burning zeal. In spite of that deep knowledge of the world which, in some respects, she possessed there were points in which she was a very child, and with certain phases of English life she was totally unacquainted. Her experience had lain almost exclusively among town populations, and of English rural life she knew actually nothing. Some of her children recalled with a smile the terror she expressed, soon after their arrival at Stone, at the novel sound of a pack of hounds in full cry, and her tender-hearted inquiry, " What could have hurt all those dogs to make them yelp so piteously ? " The habits of an agricultural peasantry would have struck her as almost as strange. In the summer of 1850, however, she had one passing glimpse of an English village, which excited in her soul a sentiment of wonder and of pity. It is thus she describes the incident : " We went to a village about ten miles from here, at the wish of Miss Lynch, who wanted us to see a person in a decline, whose sister has lately become a Catholic, and to see if we could do anything for her. I cannot express the impression it has left on my soul. I could not have believed that there was such ignorance in the world. The people we went to had never seen a crucifix, nor did they know the name of it. As to any truth of religion, they did not know its name. I wished at that moment to divide myself into fifty parts to go to the villages ! I wished for money and priests ! To see people that had never seen the instrument of their salvation, and had not the least chance of instruction !

And Mr. Neve tells me every village in England is the same. I wish I were rich ; I would construct a travelling church, and go from town to town. I cannot forget these poor people."

It was no rural village that was destined, however, to be the next scene of Mother Margaret's labours. Longton, in the Potteries, had been fixed on by Bishop Ullathorne as the site of the Staffordshire foundation ; a large, straggling, and densely-populated town, situated in the midst of what was once a fine open country, which the hand of man has sadly disfigured. Undermined in every direction by coalpits, which in some places approach so near the surface as to render the houses above them insecure,and to allow of the vibrations from the underground excavations and explosions being distinctly felt, and lit up at night by the grim, glaring furnaces, which impress the spectator who first beholds them with a sensation of awe, Longton, with its sister towns in that strange district, presents a feature of English society of which the refined and luxurious classes know but little. Its soil is black coal-dust, the walls of its enclosures formed for the most part of broken pottery. Hundreds of its inhabitants, both men and women, lived from week's end to week's end in the bowels of the earth. One of the strangest features of the place, at the time when the Dominican religious first established themselves there, was the fact that, in a population, a large proportion of which may be said to have professed no religion, a vast number were nevertheless baptized Catholics. The Protestant clergyman of the place charged a fee for baptizing a child, and the Catholic priest charged nothing. Hence the custom prevailed very extensively among those who cared to have their children baptized at all, of taking them to the priest ; and though few so baptized were brought up as Catholics, many retained a certain attraction to the name, and sent for the priest in their last moments.

The house which had been taken for the Sisters was rented from the Railway Company. It had been built, at considerable expense, some years previously, in a style rather unusual for the neighbourhood, and bore the title of "The Foley." Mother Margaret had not seen it when on the 23rd of October, 1850, she left Clifton for Staffordshire, attended by Sister M. Francis Lynch. On their way they stopped at Birmingham, where they slept that night, and heard Mass the next morning in the Bishop's private chapel, when, knowing the deep depression that always overclouded Mother Margaret's soul at the beginning of her undertakings, his Lordship addressed the two travellers with some words of exhortation and encouragement that were long remembered. It was the Feast of St. Raphael the Archangel, who, on that account, has been since regarded as the patron of our Staffordshire foundations. Arrived at Longton, they were hospitably entertained in the house of Mr. John Beech, one of the Catholic residents, their own house not being yet habitable. Its forlorn aspect, and the general appearance of the town, struck to Mother Margaret's heart with a sense of extreme desolation. Everything looked black and dismal, except the furnaces, the constant glare of which kept her awake at night, and reminded her, as she said, of the infernal regions. "The Foley," with its smart cornices, was empty and dirty. The autumn rains were flooding the cellars, and rendering the black soil so slippery that, as she described it in her first letter to Clifton, they were in danger, each time they went out, of breaking their legs. This letter bears traces of having been written under the first unfavourable impressions, and its portraiture of Longton is far from prepossessing. "I have been through the whole town," she says, "and it is a range of dust hills. The people themselves tell us it is the fag-end of the Potteries; I think it is the fag-end of the world. Nevertheless, as God has sent us here, we will do what we

can for the salvation of these poor neglected people." The Rev. Mr. Estcourt, hearing of her distress, sent her, between jest and earnest, a copy of St. Theresa's works, and a donation of £10 towards the Longton foundation. She replies to him in the same strain, after thanking him for his offering. " I think St. Theresa would have run away from Longton long before this. She had Christians to deal with ; we, heathens. She was never without a priest ; we have been without any spiritual help to encourage us. We can do much with Our Lord ; without Him we can do nothing."

These, as we have said, were first impressions. As time wore on, Longton, in spite of many discouragements, yielded its harvest of consolation ; and, ere a fortnight was over, Mother Margaret was beginning to pray for larger means, " to moralize a people with scarce an instinct of God," and to cherish hopes of one day raising saints, as she expressed it, out of the Longton mud.[1] " Pray for me," she writes, " who am unworthy to be employed in any way for the salvation of souls. If we look at Christ crucified, we shall be ashamed that we have yet done nothing for Him who has wholly spent Himself for us." She even grew to look with more kindly eyes on the mud, which suggested a pleasant word. " Our Lord means all St. Dominic's daughters to be valiant women : I thought so this morning when we were over our shoes in mud, going to Mass." During her stay in Staffordshire she spent a few hours at St. Benedict's Priory, and also visited some of the neighbouring missions, the poverty of which caused her a keen distress. At Stoke-upon-Trent she found that the school was held in the chapel, and that the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in a pewter ciborium. The emotion which this caused her was the immediate cause of an illness which

[1] Mother Margaret's expectations have been realised : Longton now (1929) possesses a fine Church and a fervent congregation.

lasted some months. "My throat swelled," she said, "and I felt choking." With her heart still full to overflowing, she wrote to her religious at Clifton: "We went yesterday to the chapel at Stoke; and oh, my Sisters! I cannot tell you what I have felt since! A total want of all things! Our Lord and God in a *pewter* ciborium, gilt a little on the inside! and not one decent thing in the place. How can we expect the people to be converted? They have nothing to attract them; and how can they believe us when we instruct them in the Real Presence? They may well doubt the faith of Catholics—the Lord of heaven and earth in *pewter* for the love of us, and His creatures using silver for the meanest purposes! I am almost wearying my beloved Spouse to give me money. We must do something for this place." And, in fact, with the generous assistance of the Community of St. Benedict's Priory, whence this letter was written, the most pressing wants of the Stoke chapel were afterwards supplied; although, at the time when she was begging for this mission, in which she was no way personally interested, she had still everything to provide for her new foundation. In the same letter she speaks of the kindness of the nuns in lending a chalice for Longton, "till we have one of our own."

How strongly does this letter of Mother Margaret's remind us of the kindred lament uttered by Boudon, whose teaching she had so thoroughly imbibed. In his golden little "Treatise on the Hidden Life," he dwells on the annihilation of Jesus in the mystery of His love. "Catholics," he says, "profess to believe this mystery, but their profession of faith only makes their ingratitude the more apparent; for if they really believe in the presence of Jesus on our altars, how is it that they commit so many irreverences? . . . The furniture of their own halls and chambers is magnificent, and the beds destined for the repose of miserable creatures are incomparably more precious than the tabernacle which contains the Body of Our Lord! . . .

People will hardly provide the necessary corporals for the Sacred Species, whilst their coffers are filled with the finest linen for the use of their own wretched bodies ; and, what is worse, *you will find chalices of tin or pewter in houses where there is no scarcity of silver plate !* "[1]

Mother Margaret returned to Clifton after an absence of three weeks, bringing with her, as postulant, the eldest daughter of the family who had so kindly received her on her first arrival at Longton. This postulant, Sister M. Stanislaus Beech, was followed by her four sisters, and all five lived to celebrate their Golden Jubilee. It had been hoped that St. Catherine's Chapel would have been finished in time to have been opened on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, but as this was not the case, the Blessed Sacrament was on that day exposed for adoration in the chapter-room, then used as a choir. Its sacred presence, so unusually near, inspired Mother Margaret with extraordinary devotion, and she owned to one of her Sisters that in a transport of fervour she could hardly restrain herself from rushing to the altar, and clasping Our Lord in her arms. Speaking of this in after years, she said, " I see the wisdom of having screens in churches, and the Blessed Sacrament raised out of reach at Exposition ; for I know by myself what persons might be tempted to do in moments of indiscreet fervour." One of her religious having once remarked to her that at the moment when the priest takes down the monstrance from the throne, she was always conscious of a special devotion at beholding Jesus in the hand of His creature, " There," she exclaimed, abruptly, " don't say anything more about it ; there are moments at Mass and Benediction when one feels what one can never put into words."

The works, meanwhile, were hurried on, in order to be completed by Christmas. Whilst the painting of the chapel was in progress, Mother Margaret took an oppor-

[1] Boudon, Vie Cachée, chap. xii. and xiii.

tunity, when the workmen were absent, to examine everything, and the novices were summoned to accompany her. Everyone admired the jewel-like effect of the painting, but her quick eye perceived that all the gold had been placed on the *outside* of the sanctuary-arch, facing the people, and that there was none on the inside, which faces the altar, and is out of sight from the body of the chapel. She was much displeased. "If those men had *faith*," she said, "they would never have stuck all the gold on the side that faces the people and put none on the side that faces Our Lord!" About the same time she wrote: "Our little chapel will be very beautiful; but, my dear Father, I shall never be satisfied, for when I look at it, I think how poor, how mean it is, for our God with us. I wish I were rich, that I might cut out Solomon's Temple!"

On the 26th of December, the Feast of St. Stephen Protomartyr, the chapel being completely finished, was solemnly consecrated by the Bishop of Clifton, and dedicated to the Holy Rosary and St. Catherine of Siena. The same evening the Blessed Sacrament was carried processionally from the chapter-room to the chapel, and the Te Deum was sung in thanksgiving. "I shall never forget," writes one of those present, "how beautiful it was that night, after having so long had no other choir than the chapter-room. It seemed like being in heaven; and our Mother constantly reminded us to be grateful to God for giving us so beautiful a sanctuary in which to sing His praises."[1] Mother Margaret's feelings on this occasion can be guessed by those only who know the spirit in which she regarded the rites and benedictions of the Church. It was the antique liturgical spirit of the ages of faith—not the mere æsthetic taste which men acquire out of books, but a profound sentiment, the genuine offspring of faith. The possession of a consecrated church was in her eyes a gift, a privilege, a special means of grace, to be numbered

[1] The Clifton Convent no longer exists, circumstances having necessitated its closing in 1877.

among God's choicest favours. She poured out her heart this time, not in a letter, but in a prayer, which is still preserved in her own handwriting.

" To Thee, Almighty Lord of heaven and earth, adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; to Thee, our Lord and God in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar ; to Thee, most august Queen of heaven and earth, our Divine Mother Mary ; to thee, our Holy Father, St. Dominic ; St. Catherine of Siena, our Holy Mother ; and to all you, men and women, saints of God, of our Holy Order ; and all you, saints and angels in heaven—we offer this little tribute of the adorning of this house. May it be acceptable to Thee, my God, to increase Thy honour and glory ; may it be acceptable to our bleeding Bridegroom, and help to save those souls for which He gave His Precious Blood, and for whom He remains hidden in the Sacrament of His love ; may it be acceptable to the Holy Spirit, that the exterior signs of the hidden graces we receive from Him in this place may lead others to His holy love ; and may it be acceptable to our Divine Mother Mary, increasing in all hearts that enter here, love, honour, and devotion towards thee, our tender and beloved Benefactress, Protectress, and Superioress, to whom, after God, we owe all we have and hope for ; may it be acceptable to our Holy Father, St. Dominic, St. Catherine of Siena, our Mother, and all the saints of our Order ; and also to all the saints and angels who glorify our God day and night in His Church triumphant. All that we have is Thine, dearest Lord, and all shall be returned to Thee ; deign only to accept our unworthy service ; and let all we do be to Thy honour and glory, and to our abjection and humiliation. Amen."

At the close of this year, 1850, the Community numbered fifteen professed religious, two novices, and six postulants. The last day of the old year had been marked by a memorable circumstance : the black habit had been

laid aside for ever, and henceforward the religious assumed their proper livery, the white wool of St. Dominic.

The rapid extension of their work gave rise meanwhile to the discussion of an important question, and for the first time elicited from Mother Margaret a strong expression of her opinions on the subject of education. The Sisters were now conducting the Clifton poor-schools, a middle school within their own convent, and other schools at Bridgwater; whilst at Longton it was evident that schools of every kind would form their principal means of usefulness. They had hitherto worked on independent of all aid and all inspection, a proceeding which many of their friends considered as exceedingly old-fashioned, and which was certainly but little in accordance with the principles of the day. The advantages to be derived from Government aid and inspection were continually urged on Mother Margaret's attention, and probably the hardest things ever said of her were occasioned by her resistance on this point. Two circumstances seemed to render these hard things plausible: the fact, very much exaggerated in popular estimation, of her being herself uneducated, and her inability to explain exactly *why* she so constantly refused to have anything to do with Government. The first of these circumstances need not here be dwelt on; it was obviously a temptation for those who did not agree with her views to attribute them to her "ignorance": but the second requires some comment, as it reveals a certain peculiarity in her mind. As has been said before, she did not receive her ideas by the way of reasoning: she held them as an instinct. Gifted as she undoubtedly was with many great powers, even in the intellectual order, that of *reasoning* was not among the number. "My God," she wrote, "has not given me that power." Not that she really had no ground or motive for the views she held, but they lay so deep that it was a labour to bring them to the surface; nor did she often care to take that trouble, either

for her own satisfaction or that of others. The habit of her mind was to *judge*, not to *analyse ;* and in course of time the sagacity of her judgments generally came to be acknowledged. But this peculiar constitution of mind often perplexed those about her, and not unfrequently years elapsed before some of her own religious were able thoroughly to gauge her views and instincts to the bottom. It was a peculiarity specially trying, and we may perhaps say, specially *medicinal*, to minds that had been trained in Protestantism, and accustomed, therefore, to exaggerate the claims of reason. Her real principles on this question of education were gradually brought out, and might be clearly and solidly stated, but it was done only by degrees ; and when questioned on the subject, she generally contented herself with a few strong, broad words, the coherence of which was not always perceptible. Not to know this speciality of her style would be not to know Mother Margaret ; and we will therefore quote one letter, written in reply to some questions put to her by one of the religious, who was at this time in charge of the schools : " Write and ask the Bishop his opinion about inspection. I am not a competent judge. It may be that in my younger years I saw so bad a use made of it (education), that I prayed at that time to forget everything I had learned except what was needful for my salvation. From that time I have had quite, I know not what, feeling about learning. Therefore, I intend with God's grace not to interfere as long as I detect no heresy, and that solid virtue is taught ; for there is in the inmost of my soul a feeling I cannot account for. Never shall I feel happy when we receive money from an infidel Government. Better to be an abject in God's house. When I say this, I do not mean it to be acted upon. I say again I am no judge, nor should I like my opinion to be taken, but shall be pleased if my Superiors act in direct opposition to it. I am not fit to give an opinion about things I do not understand.

. . . What you say respecting the teaching is true, but it does not follow that we must have anything to do with Government. I abhor the name of it; for well I know they are not in the friendship of Jesus, nor do they wish to establish His reign in all hearts."

To another of her religious, who had sent her some questions concerning the management of the schools she writes in the same strain. "About the schools you must do as you think best. I only request that, in writing to me about them, you will never use the words, *system*, *pupil-teachers*, and the rest. Our only system must be to make the children Christians."

We have quoted these letters as apt examples of her style, and of that inability to state her views formally, which often puzzled her questioners, and was the despair of anyone who had a taste for logical precision. In the following extract, however, which belongs to the same date, we catch a clearer insight into her real sentiments. "I cannot but think that *Old Harry* has something to do with this great school movement. In the end it will turn out a hindrance to Religious teaching the poor. We know the pride and vanity of England; how most people run after anything new; and where money is the object, they become worshippers directly. I think you will find that when the Religious have prepared their pupil-teachers, these will take precedence of their mistresses. I fear it will be in England, as it always has been, mind and body will be taught, and the poor soul (the only precious part of man) will be left in ignorance. I do not know what I am writing about, but I have asked our Lord so many times to let me see it in the true light, and I always have the same impressions. I say, again, perhaps I am too stupid to understand what I am writing. I wish we had schools to teach humility and love of the cross—the only lesson our Divine Master, the Eternal Wisdom, has wished us to learn of Him."

Nor should we omit, in this place, the written statement of her views, which she afterwards drew up in compliance with the wishes of one of her religious :—

"My very dear Child—I can hardly put into words my very great dislike to have anything to do with governments, or committees, or anything where there are a great many opinions and a multiplicity of voices and speeches. I say again, I do not know how to answer what you ask, for my instincts are so vivid and so strong on these points, that I see more than I can say or write ; the evil is before me like a large plain picture, and I seem to see all the evils that would come from this over-educating of those whom God has placed in humbler life, put aside the want of a pure intention in the Government, which could never mean any good to the Catholic Church. One of the greatest evils is that of making young, innocent, interesting girls, who would be farm-servants or servants of some class or other, too refined, so that they are ashamed of the conversation of their poor parents, aim to be equal to those whom God has taught us to be subject to, and thus become easily the dupes of bad designing men, who are unfaithful to their wives, to virtue, and to God. Another evil is that these young women get such a love for reading and other refined tastes, that they are not fit to be the wife of a poor tradesman or labourer ; for, with their heads full of all that has been taught in the schools of our day, they are not content to sit at home and mend, and make, and wash, and iron, as their duty is ; the poor man in these days has not a happy cottage or fireside to go to, so his only resource is the public-house ; and we know where all that ends. Much, very much more could I say on this ; but I thank God I have lived to see the state of things changed. Had it gone on for years longer we should have had no servants, no farmers' daughters that would work, and no poor men's wives, and not one Christian mother, for that which fosters

pride destroys Christianity, modesty, and humility, and these truly domestic virtues are the blessings and comforts of a poor man's home.

" Do not think from this I would like our own humbler classes to be less educated than others. No, I would like them to be superior to other poor in every way and everything, as they are in reality superior to them, by the blessing of faith and the teaching of the one true and only Catholic Church ; but let all and each be content to qualify themselves for the state God has placed, or will place, them in. The Government did one good thing ; it made us look about us and improve the education of our schools.

" When first I heard of the Government proposal for our poor-schools, one of the things that struck me was, it was a deep-laid scheme to destroy, in time, all religious teaching, for although it was said all was to be done by our Religious, yet the end was to get secular girls taught so as to supersede all our Religious teaching ; but the greatest of all evils was the Religious themselves being so taken with it, although it must and would destroy the whole foundation of a religious, interior, spiritual life. It was a deep-laid snare of the devil, at the time when our dear Lord was renewing the religious life, and calling so many generous women to serve Him. He laid the bait well, for nearly all were caught by it, and your poor ignorant Mother was considered, what she really was, quite unfit for the times and for the progress of education. My dear Sisters, it is for you I say these things. We leave the world to be God's servants, not the servants of any government, or man, or woman, but God's free agents. I have had letters from some of those good Religious who were entrapped before they knew. They told me they could not meditate, or say a Pater or Ave, without parsing it, and two or three have told me their hair on their heads stood on end when they expected the inspector, and that sleep fled their eyes for weeks before an examination.

Could this be the work or call of God? No, my dear children; it would destroy the whole features of a religious life. These are some of the things I foresaw, and the fearful effects it would and did cause by one outvying the others to appear more learned, more acute, more esteemed, by these inspectors, and to have the name published of this or that nun—this is not to what God calls us when He gives us the precious grace of a vocation to a religious life. God and all this secular learning, which does not help the soul in any way, cannot go together. You have seen two fearful marks of the overworking of the brain, and how many more are there that we have not seen? Be faithful to God, to your holy state, and ever avoid government committees, or anything secular, as much as you can. The world never had, nor never will have, the interests of God at heart, so all it does with this cover, suspect, and avoid—let God, and God only, be your one, your only aim."[1]

Her paramount care was for the education of the *soul*, a thing she instinctively felt would sooner or later be sacrificed by any national system; and who shall say that on this point her instinct did not guide her aright? But she was not on that account indifferent to the education of the *mind*, although in regard of the poor she considered that it should have its limitations; and she held fast to the old-fashioned notion that a knowledge of needlework may do a poor girl more useful service than a knowledge of grammar. For the rest it may be safely said that whatever the world thought of her "ignorance" (and it thought nothing which she herself would have been backward to confirm), few women have done more to promote solid education than Mother Margaret. She had that in her which, had Providence set her on a throne, would have

[1] The developments of the Educational system after Mother Margaret's death, rendered the placing of our Elementary Schools under Government essential to their efficiency and preservation.

made her a munificent patron of learning and the arts. I is true she often said strong things against " intellect," b which she intended intellectual *pride* ; and if she saw, c fancied she saw, any germ of that vice in those who ad dressed her, they came off badly enough. It must also b remembered that so far from studying worldly prudence i her intercourse with others, and restraining the expressio of her opinions with those who might readily misinterpre her strong words, she considered this a sort of infidelity and held herself bound to deal them out to all alike, with out measure or dilution. " Remember —— is a man of in tellect," she writes, " *therefore*, wise in his own conceits. should like to teach him A, B, C." As she wrote, s also she spoke, with a certain epigrammatic terseness, no without its tinge of exaggeration ; and visitors in the con vent parlour, who were strangers to her style, not unnatur ally carried away the notion that Mother Margaret wa the declared enemy of intellect and education. Hov untrue this was her children can best bear witness. He work, and the work of those whom she gathered aroun her, has been mainly carried on in the school. Not onl so, but within her own Community she far exceeded th ordinary rules of a religious superior, in encouraging th use and cultivation of the intellect. Assisted by two mos generous benefactors,[1] she collected a valuable library, an never grudged expense in the purchase of books. In familiar letter to one of these friends, after thanking hin for a donation of some beautiful jasper pillars for th tabernacle, she says, " May God reward you a thousan times ; the Church *and books* are the weak points of you unworthy friend."

When schools of a higher character began to be estab lished in her convent, she expressed the utmost solicitud that the pupils should be thoroughly well taught, and, tw years before her death, she sent for the mistress of one o

[1] The Very Rev. Spencer Northcote, and the Very Rev. E. Estcourt

these schools, at that time Mother Francis Raphael Drane, and desired that the children might be taught to *write verses*. "Your mother is only an *ignoramus*," she said, "but she would like St. Dominic's schools to be the best, and —— tells me that writing verses is good for the children's English." With some little trouble the new branch of study was introduced, and the first verses composed by the young poets were carried to her room. "Now, you have given me a real pleasure," she said; "I don't know if the verses are good or bad, but I should like our children to learn *everything*."

On the 6th of January, 1851, a little colony of religious left Clifton for Longton, where Mother Margaret's first care was to convert the drawing-room of the Foley into a very devout chapel. As soon as it was arranged, she applied to the bishop for permission to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved; for, she says, "I never feel courage till we have our Lord in the house." This was granted, and the Rev. J. Dixon was appointed chaplain to the convent. Preparations were immediately made for beginning a middle-class school in the house; the stables were turned into a poor-school, and a night-school was also opened, in which the Sisters very soon had the consolation of receiving nearly eighty girls, who were employed during the day at the pottery-works. The chapel being open to the people for Mass and evening services, they resorted to it in such numbers as to fill not only the chapel, but every available standing-place in the hall and staircase. The warm welcome given by the people to the nuns, and the eagerness they displayed to avail themselves of every help that was offered them, compensated for every sacrifice; and the experience of Longton has been renewed again and again at other religious foundations. Mother Margaret's letters to her Sisters at Clifton, written in the first effusion of zeal, overflow with her ever-expanding desires to do more for God and for souls. "*Pray, pray!* my dear children, and be

ready to make any sacrifice to save souls and advance God's Church on earth. See how little He makes Himself for ungrateful man! Pray much for the Potteries! I have put them in a particular manner under the protection of our Holy Father. . . . I think our Lord sends me from place to place to stir me up. But what can we do, even when we do our best?" It was the *spiritual* destitution of the people which thus moved her, for actual poverty was not much felt in this population, and far more distressing to her heart than any temporal poverty endured by creatures was that to which she beheld our Divine Lord subjecting Himself within His own tabernacle. "The wants of our God," she writes, "are far more visible here than those of His suffering members. Men eat, drink, and sleep as though they had no souls." She had not forgotten the chapel at Stoke, and was at this time begging for means to procure a silver ciborium for it. "See how long, how patiently, the Eternal Wisdom waits," she says, "for His creatures to give Him a clean vessel in which to rest His sacred Body, there to remain for the love of those who think it too much to give Him their left-off clothes." The ciborium, when obtained, through the help of the nuns of St. Benedict's Priory, was presented to Stoke, together with a cope, alb, and Benediction veil. This was the poverty she loved best to relieve, the destitution whose appeals she could never resist. The language of her heart was ever that of David, "Shall I dwell in a house of cedar, whilst the Lord dwelleth in curtains?" As her Community increased, and she became able, among its other works, to include the embroidery and manufacture of church vestments, she gave full vent to her liberality in this respect, and was continually supplying poor missions with church linen and vestments to an extent of which even her own religious are probably but partially aware. Her benefactions of this kind, bestowed on priests and churches wholly unconnected with the Community, were in fact innumer-

able, and many such cases have only accidentally come to our knowledge. We may say that it was her favourite charity to "give to the Lord," and the subject of some of her most frequent exhortations to seculars. "I fear," she says, in one of her letters from Longton, "the rich will be rigorously judged at the last day for spending so much on their bodies, and leaving our Lord in poverty, rags, and dirt. Protestants may well doubt of the presence of our Lord with us when we show so much coldness towards the place where His Majesty resides." On the other hand, if she found any inspired with the same generous impulses as herself, she loved to encourage them, and would appeal to their generosity with a frank simplicity which they perfectly understood. "Reverend and dear Father," she writes to the Rev. Dr. Northcote, the most constant and inexhaustible of all her benefactors, "all you can get at Lyons you may bring back with you. Spend all your money for God and the Church, and come safe back. Ever yours in Jesus." And from her dying bed she sent a message to a young lady, Augusta Berkeley, just about to leave the convent school: "Dear Augusta, always remember the Church and the poor—but the Church first."

She returned to Clifton, on the 29th of January, in a very suffering state of health, though full of cheerful hopes for the new foundation. But the large field of work which appeared to be opening for the Community in the Potteries demanded many labourers, and, as the progress of the religious at Bridgwater had not answered their expectations, it was decided on withdrawing the Sisters from that place, so as to increase the strength of the Longton Community. They accordingly left Bridgwater on the 27th of April. On the same day Miss Carpue died suddenly. Her blind sister survived for several years, and continued to reside at Clifton, being daily visited by one of the Religious from the convent until the day of her death. Mother Margaret was accustomed to say that this was a duty of charity, which

must be put before every other, in gratitude for the many benefactions received from this family. The last survivor announced her intention of carrying out the wishes of her brother and sister, by bequeathing a large legacy to the convent; but the intention was never legally specified; and, of the money left for charitable purposes, the sum of £20 alone was received by the Community. This circumstance is mentioned here simply as illustrating the fact how little Mother Margaret ever owed to human aid. In almost every case where promises of support were given, they in one way or other failed. Trustees preferred the claims of other charities, or wills were disputed, or bequests were made vaguely; sometimes those that had been promised were never made at all. Mother Margaret often referred to circumstances of this nature in speaking to her religious children, and to her friends, in proof that God chose her to depend on Him alone, and not on the arm of flesh. The most considerable bequest ever made to the Community, was the legacy left by the Rev. Benjamin Hulme, in 1852, towards the support of a convent in the Potteries. Even this dwindled down, by various demands made on it, to a sum far below the original legacy, which in accordance with the terms of the bequest,was afterwards expended on the erection of the convent at Stoke-upon-Trent. But so impressed was Mother Margaret with the conviction that money of this sort did not prosper with her, and that it was not through these human channels that she was to derive the means of working for God, that, at each fresh demand which reduced the value of this legacy, she expressed her satisfaction that "some more of the money was gone;" and she was only restrained by the advice of friends from giving it up altogether. She regarded the temptation to trust in the help or promises of any creature as an infidelity to God, who, she said, seemed ever to reproach her if she did so, saying to her, as it were, "Have I ever failed you?" And when in distress for temporal means, it was not to man,

but to God, that she made her complaint. The following letter, found among her other papers, and written at an earlier period when, as she states in her correspondence, "the income of the Community had diminished to about £10 certain—blessed be God!" will best illustrate in what way she carried out her favourite motto, *In te Domine, speravi* :—

"GOD ALONE!

"My Lord and my God, the only Spouse of my soul, sweet Jesus, in the Most Holy Sacrament:

"I beg and beseech You, my most beloved Spouse, that You will vouchsafe to help and assist us, the most contemptible of Your creatures. We are, in a most special manner the children of Your Divine Mother, and have no other resource but in You, my God and my All! You know how vain it will be for me to apply to creatures—You, my God, and You only, are my only hope. Send us, then, O Almighty Lord of Heaven and earth! the necessary means of advancing Your greater glory, by taking the destitute orphans, assisting the sick, and receiving those whom You have called to the religious state from all eternity, and who have not the means of accomplishing it. Give us, then dear Jesus, all that is requisite to obtain these desired ends. I ask it, dear Jesus, in the name of Your Sacred Wounds and Precious Blood, particularly the first drops of Blood You shed at Your Circumcision—I ask it through Your most holy and sweet name of Jesus, and through the love You bear the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit. I ask it through the love You have for Your Divine Immaculate Mother Mary. Hear us, sweet Jesus, and help us; we have no other resource but Thee: all our confidence is in the multitude of Thy tender mercies, who lookest always with compassion on the poor and lowly. Help us by Your almighty power, who madest the heavens and earth out

of nothing by Your only word. With it, can it be difficult to help the most needy of Your children ? If I have asked anything contrary to Your ever-to-be-adored will, grant it not ; for in life and death, and after death, I wish only its accomplishment. Help us, most bountiful God ! help us ; help us, sweet Jesus ! help us. Help us, Divine Spirit ! help us, Mother of the Incarnate Word ! help us, above all, to be humble, simple, to love God and our neighbour, to have but one wish and desire—the interest and glory of God alone.—The most unworthy, sinful, and least of all creatures, MARGARET,

Of the Mother of God."

The slender numbers of the Communities, and the paramount importance of first providing for the necessities of Longton obliged her to refuse many applications made about this time for filiations in other parts of England. " How wonderful are the ways of God with His unworthy creatures ! " she writes. " We are asked for in all places. Dr. —— said he would go down on his knees if we would go into his district. The work begun with such poor materials begins to flourish in spite of all the knocks it has had."

From this time, her daily course of labour began to include that constant and minute correspondence with her absent children which increased with the multiplication of her convents, until it gradually withdrew her from almost every other work. The prodigious extent of this correspondence can only be roughly estimated, but the letters preserved amount to many thousands. Seated at her desk, she appeared to be present in each Community, conscious of the requirements of every office, and every individual Sister, and directing the spiritual and material government of each house, as precisely as though present on the spot. Not only her days, but her nights also, were absorbed with thoughts of the necessities of those in-

trusted to her care; for, as she acknowledged to her spiritual guide, during those long, wakeful hours, she was busy turning over in her mind the needs, the trials, the capabilities of each one. The activity of her brain, at all times excessive, seemed to increase as her work expanded, and this, too, at the very time when both directors and physicians were urging the necessity of *rest*—a necessity, alas! but too real, but one that was never suffered to enjoy its claims. "Do not talk to me of rest," she says in one of her letters; "I hope never to rest till I get to heaven. It is an idle word for a religious."

The copious extracts which we hope to give from this correspondence will of course speak for themselves, yet it may be well to say something in this place of its general character. It presented a true portraiture of the soul of the writer, and was as many-sided and as remarkable for that mixture of elevation and simplicity, which made one of her friends truly remark—"Mother Margaret was a *wonderful* woman, the most extraordinary combination of the natural and the supernatural that ever lived." From the sublimest ideas, expressed in the sublimest language, she could turn to the homeliest practical details. If the loftiness of her style on spiritual matters reminds you of St. Catherine of Siena, no less does the terseness of her shrewd remarks recall St. Theresa. Indeed, the similarity of her epistolary style to that of the latter saint was too obvious to escape observation. When the English translation of some of St. Theresa's Letters was first published, Bishop Ullathorne sent her a copy of the work without making any comment. In her letter, thanking him for the book, she says that she guesses what was in his mind, adding that she was glad she had never read the letters before, or it might have been thought that she had tried to imitate them. Perhaps the most remarkable feature in Mother Margaret's epistolary style, however, was the facility with which she adapted it to the individual

character of each one whom she addressed. With some she was pithy and laconic, and, if perfectly at her ease, would convey her direction or her reproofs in a certain axiomatic language that forcibly reminds you of St. Theresa. "Affection does not consist in writing letters to kill time; God give you grace to kill self; let us have more of God and less of self." "As for all this variety of imaginations, do as St. Francis of Sales says—squash them like so many gnats." "Young people, when first thrown into an active life, think all is to be done by giving and talking. I say, all is to be done by prayer." "If you really think your time is short, make a good use of it. Speak little and do much." To a novice-mistress she writes, "You say —— is very quiet and very good; I say, very good and very lazy. Those very quiet people don't take my fancy; I would rather they did the will of God than talked about it." "Don't let any one speak of their digestion; a religious should not know she had such a thing." "—— is married to a Protestant! Keep me from the devout people!" Like St. Theresa, too, she could at times be playful: "Oh that some old woman would leave you a large fortune!" she writes, to one of her most constant benefactors; "I know I should get some of it. See what a wicked woman I am; I always want to be getting money!" At other times she was tender, expansive, eloquent. Her letters addressed to her Communities on different Feasts might be cited in proof of this, but her private correspondence with her religious children is often couched in a style of singular beauty. "I fear you will have had a good share, my beloved child," she writes to one, "in the trials in which our Beloved favours His chosen ones. Why do I use the word *fear*? They are the best gifts of God; each trial is a proof of His watchful love. *He must be very, very near us when we feel the thorns with which He is crowned.* It is a time of harvest when we get alone with God. Then love gains strength. The more

we know, the more we desire to know and love this God of love—our one, our true, our only Lover!" Writing to Bishop Ullathorne, after a Retreat in which he had given the Religious some precious instructions on humility, she says, "We have drawn in from you, my dear father, the first seeds of this virtue, so that the word has become to us a sweet and pleasing sound, like a beautiful-sounding instrument. May we try and practise it till we become first-rate musicians, so that humility in our words, in our works, and in all our affections, may shine forth, and show that we are the spouses of a humble, condescending God!"

In reading some of her letters to her children you would think you had opened a page of the Canticles. "I must not forget you, although you are so little. Little as you are, I wish you to grow less and less, that your Divine Spouse may have the joy of saying to you, 'Come, my little one, my love, my dove, come, and grow great in my kingdom.'" A chantress is in anxiety lest the Holy Week services should not be rightly performed for want of proper singers. "Leave all to God," she writes to her; "do your best, and be resigned. Keep close to your Divine and suffering Spouse. He had no soft music to still His pains. His music was the wicked cries of the multitude. Oh, how condescending of our loving God to allow us in some way to soothe His sorrowing heart by the expression of our love! For I know, my child, that you do love Him, and I love Him too. Cold as the feeling is, He will accept it: so let us love, be humble, and take all things with tranquillity." Occasionally her most sublime and touching effusions of heart terminate in some familiar little trait of maternal tenderness. "Let God alone be your refuge and strength," she writes to a local superioress, on the eve of a great feast of the Order. "A few minutes spent before the most Adorable Sacrament will obtain you more light than any counsel of creatures. God bless you all, my children, and make you

all like our sainted ancestors. Mind you have rolls for breakfast to-morrow, and a good recreation in the afternoon."

This last quotation may possibly scandalise some, as addressed to a Community of Sisters of Penance. We will risk its insertion, however, having heard one, who had a good right to judge, declare, after perusing these letters, that nothing in them struck him so much as these expressions of indulgence towards a far-off colony of her children, who, as she well knew, needed to be cheered amid the black mud of Longton. We will venture on even a more startling extract, or what may possibly seem so in the eyes of the world. Who that knew Mother Margaret can have been insensible to her spirit of hospitality? It was, like her faith, on the true, antique model. She had a real delight in entertaining guests, and making them at home, and—shall we add it?—in providing them with a good dinner. As to priests, she felt she could not do enough to secure the health and comfort of those who laboured day and night in the service of the Lord. So when she heard that some of the Fathers were going on a visit to Longton, she writes at once—"on hospitable thoughts intent"—"Get a large piece of beef, and a leg of lamb for their dinner, pease and potatoes, and a good bread and butter pudding, and a fruit pie; and get them some good beer." And on another occasion, "I hope Sister —— has thought of making some mince meat. You must have some mince pies and plum-puddings for Christmas; and give Father —— something good sometimes, and a good supper at night."

This solicitude of hers for the bodily comfort and well-being of her guests, and specially of the priests who visited or served her convents, was so well known to her own Religious that they used to cite it among the points of resemblance which she bore to our holy Mother. In the life of St. Catherine of Siena, we find the same union of

the practical with the sublime ; and in particular we read that by reason of the multitudes that flocked to ask her counsel, the confessors who attended her reported of themselves, that "many times they sat in confession from morning to night without bodily refection ; yea, and sometimes, when night came, had scarcely so much leisure as to receive a little sustenance. The which when the holy maid perceived, she gave charge to the rest that were about her, that *they should have a care of the confessors*, and provide them things necessary." And again we read that, " though she neither had nor would have anything for the relief of herself or her family but only what she received of pure alms, *yet she was so liberal, and free of heart, and had such a love to hospitality, that she made no difference between receiving one man or a hundred*." And had these words been written of Mother Margaret, they could scarcely have drawn this feature in her character more exactly. However, not to leave the reader under the impression that the rolls for breakfast and Christmas puddings may be taken as a sample of her ordinary directions in the matter of creature comforts, we will close these passing extracts with some of a different character, the tenor of which was of far more frequent repetition. When the Lenten Indults of the year 1866 appeared, granting the faithful some increased dispensations, she wrote to all her convents, " The new dispensations make no difference to us : all we have got to do is to fast and pray the more." " The nearer we keep to all our rule prescribes the more God will help us. A *relaxed* house is my greatest dread. I would rather see you all die of hard work and austerity, or pestilence." At the close of a Lent she writes, " It is a joy and a comfort to me to know that all my dear children have been fasting, and abstaining, and keeping to all the austerities of the Order. It is some reparation for the sensuality of the day. Thank God we *work* hard, *pray* hard, and *live* hard ; may it be so to the end ! " " Absti-

nence never hurt any one; if our heart is in our work, what does the food signify? Let the body die and go to heaven." She was no friend to that over-solicitude for health which is the canker-worm of generosity, and the cloak of a subtle self-indulgence, but made continual war upon it, often reminding her religious that "no one would die before their time; and that if they died of over-work or fasting, what better could they desire." A vein of quiet humour mingled with her exhortations on this subject, again reminding us of St. Theresa's dislike of headaches, and of her words, addressed to some fanciful subjects, "whom I told," she says, "that if we must die, well and good, die we would, all three; for I accounted this better than to introduce such customs into monasteries." It must be added, however, that in cases of real necessity no one granted dispensations with a freer heart than Mother Margaret, whose tenderness towards the sick was unvarying.

The year 1851 was made notable in England by the opening of the first great Exhibition of International Industry in Hyde Park. Those who witnessed the fairy-like spectacle, which seemed like an epitome of the world, might have been astonished to know that it occupied a good share of Mother Margaret's thoughts, and that when she thought of the multitudes who would for months be assembled in the capital in search of wealth or amusement, it filled her with a kind of terror. In her simplicity she feared lest it would bring the plague, and she ordered that the devotions for the month of May, both at Clifton and Longton, should be chiefly offered "in reparation for the sins likely to be committed at that time in London." We can conceive the amazement which such a piece of intelligence would have evoked from the gay crowds who, during that month of May, were thronging the Crystal Palace. Yet some, perhaps, as they gazed on its sparkling walls, might have been reminded of the poet's words :—

" Think ye the spires that glow so bright
In front of yonder setting sun
Stand by their own unshaken might ?
No—where th' upholding grace is won,
We dare not ask, nor Heaven would tell ;
But sure, from many a hidden dell,
From many a rural nook, unthought of there,
Rises for that proud world, the saints' prevailing prayer."[1]

And so that month of May was celebrated with extraordinary solemnity. At Clifton it was opened with a solemn procession, in which the image of Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners, and the picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel, were carried round the cloisters and the Bishops of Clifton and Birmingham both assisted at the ceremony. Bishop Hendren was a martyr to the gout, and Mother Margaret, when requesting his presence on this occasion, promised him, on the part of Our Lady, that if he assisted at this devotion he should not have the gout for a twelvemonth. He complied with her suggestion, and during the following year, as he failed not gratefully to acknowledge, he was actually free from his usual painful attacks. Every day, during the entire month of May, one religious was in retreat as a victim of expiation, and on Ascension day the devotions closed with another beautiful and impressive function.

Meanwhile events were taking place of considerable importance to the Dominican Order at large, and the English province in particular. The Passionist Fathers having withdrawn from the mission of Woodchester, the church built there, through the munificence of W. Leigh, Esq., was, at the recommendation of Bishop Ullathorne, offered to the Dominican Fathers, who had by this time established themselves there. They were now in expectation of receiving a visit from the newly appointed Vicar-General of the Order, the Most Reverend Vincent Alexander Jandel, one of the early companions of Père Lacordaire, who was nominated to that office by his Holiness in July,

[1] *Christian Year.* Hymn for All Saints' Day.

1850.[1] He immediately began the visitation of the Provinces, and rumours were now afloat that he might any day be expected in England. It was of course desirable that Mother Margaret and her religious Sisters should take the opportunity of soliciting his protection; and a letter was consequently drawn up in her name and addressed to his Paternity, giving a brief sketch of the origin and progress of the Community, its object and rule. In this letter it is stated that the religious conform themselves in all particulars to the Constitutions of the Second Order, such things only excepted as would hinder them from carrying on the active works of charity; and that an English translation of the Constitutions adapted to their special necessities is in course of preparation, and when completed, will be submitted to his approval. The appointment of his Lordship, the Bishop of Birmingham, as their superior, is also mentioned, and the Vicar-General is respectfully requested not to overlook this humble institute on the occasion of his expected visit to England. A kind reply to this letter was received on the 8th of July, promising to visit the convent at Clifton, some time in the ensuing month. On the 5th of August the Religious began their annual Retreat, which was destined to be somewhat a desultory one. The first interruption was caused by the death of Sister M. Bernard King, which had been long expected, and took place at last on the 10th of the same month. After the funeral, the spiritual exercises of the Retreat were resumed, but on the 13th a letter was received from the Provincial, informing them that the General would be at Clifton in the course of an hour or two, and recommending that he should be received with the solemnities prescribed in the

[1] The proposed Chapter-General of the Order, referred to in a previous page, never took place; and instead of the Chapter electing a new *Master-General*, the Pope nominated Père Jandel *Vicar-General* of the Order, which office he continued to hold until the year 1856, when he was nominated Master-General for six years; and finally in the Chapter-General of 1862 was elected to the same office for the extraordinary term of twelve years.

Processional. His Paternity arrived about noon, when the whole Community, headed by the Chaplain, Rev. Dr. Neve, and the Father, who was giving the Retreat, received him at the door of the convent, and conducted him processionally to the Choir, where he delivered a short address in French. In the course of the afternoon several questions relative to observance were submitted to him, and various papers received his signature.

It had been determined to request his Paternity to give the habit to two postulants, Sister M. Hyacinth Stone and another, then preparing for their clothing, and as he was necessarily obliged to leave Clifton the following morning, the ceremony had to be performed after the evening service. Arrangements for the purpose were therefore made with extraordinary celerity, and the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary who attended that evening were not a little taken by surprise on entering the chapel to find it transformed into a temporary choir, and to be informed how very interesting a function was about to take place. There was something that impressed, not the imagination only, but the heart, in the fact of beholding on English soil the successor of St. Dominic, surrounded by sons and daughters of his Order, publicly giving the white habit of that Order to neophytes of English blood. It was indeed a resurrection—a token of "the Second Spring."

The Father-General left Clifton on the morning of the 14th, and proceeded to Hinckley, where, in concert with the Very Rev. Father Aylward,[1] he drew up a petition to be sent to the Holy See in the name of himself and the Bishop of Birmingham, of which the following is a translation :—

"MOST HOLY FATHER.—Prostrate at the feet of your

[1] "The Father-General drew up the accompanying document at Hinckley last night, and, as your Lordship will perceive, has signed it. If, therefore, your Lordship pleases to sign it also, the best plan will be to dispatch it off immediately to Rome."—Letter from Very Rev. Father Aylward to the Bishop of Birmingham, dated Atherstone, August 16th, 1851.

Holiness, we William Bernard Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham, and Brother Alexander Vincent Jandel, Vicar-General of the Order of Preachers, humbly declare that, for some years past, there have existed in England Sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic, bound by the three religious vows, and living in community, who devote themselves to relieving the poor, visiting the sick, and the discharge of all the other works of charity, and who unceasingly fulfil this holy ministry with great fervour, and to the edification of the people. The said Bishop (being then Vicar-Apostolic of the Western District of England) having, with great labour, established the first Community of these Sisters in his diocese at Clifton, full jurisdiction over it was granted to him by Brother Vincent Ajello, Master-General of the Order of Preachers in the year 1847, for his lifetime; with power also to found new houses. Now, therefore, the number of this pious Community increasing from day to day, the same Bishop of Birmingham has founded in his present diocese a general Novitiate-House[1] for the whole of England, that so better provision may be made for unity of spirit and the perpetuity of the work; wherefore Brother A. V. Jandel, having witnessed in his visitation of the English province the abundant fruits produced by this salutary institution, by the advice of the Fathers of the Province, with great joy and sense of gratitude, grants until his death, in the fullest manner, to the said Bishop, on whose zeal and vigilant care its foundation and preservation depend, all his own spiritual faculties and jurisdiction over each and all of the Sisters of the Third Order, and their houses which now exist, or shall in time to come exist throughout the whole of England.

"But in order that this agreement may more securely obtain its effect, if it be fortified by the strength of apostolic power, both, by common consent, to wit, the said

[1] The house at Longton is here referred to, at which an attempt was made to begin the Novitiate, before its establishment at Stone.

Bishop of Birmingham, and the Vicar-General of the Order of Preachers, humbly beseech your Holiness to vouchsafe to confirm it by your authority.

WILLIAM BERNARD, *Bp. of Birmingham.*
BR. A. V. JANDEL, *Vic.-Gen. S. O. Præd.*"

The Papal Rescript, granting the prayer of the above petition, *salvis juribus ordinariorum*, is dated August 31, 1851.

The joy caused by these events was damped by Mother Margaret's daily increasing indisposition. Besides her ordinary fatigues and cares she was at this time enduring additional anxiety at the prospect of losing the protection of Bishop Hendren, who had ever shown himself a kind and considerate friend, and whose approaching removal from the diocese of Clifton to that of Nottingham she felt as a heavy cross. Those who enjoyed the personal friendship of that excellent prelate and true religious, and who remembered his just and upright character, his paternal kindness, with its touch of gentle humour, and withal the simplicity that delighted in nothing so much as forgetting cares and dignities alike in a happy half-hour among the treasures of his library, knew too how readily he endeared himself to those under his pastoral rule, and especially to *nuns*, whom he always treated with the frank familiarity of a father. What graceful letters he could write them, how agreeably he scolded them, and what childlike delight he showed when, by way of pleasant pastime, they sent him a copy of verses, or a cake, which the ambitious hands of the amateur pastry-cook had adorned with a sugar crosier and mitre! The good Bishop appreciated his cake, and wrote a playful letter of thanks. "Mr. Pugin," he says, "shall not see the mitre; poor man, it would drive him crazy with vexation and jealousy: he could never hope to invent anything half so elegant. As to the *crosier* you send me, you say I shall find it *sweet* and *light*. Why, then, it is not like

the one I usually carry. It more resembles the yoke and burthen of our Lord, but *they* are sweet only to those who bear them with a good-will; to those who growl and grumble they become, I believe, very heavy and galling." Mother Margaret did not often commit a rubrical blunder but on one occasion, in ignorance of the laws which regulate such matters, she requested Bishop Hendren to act as their extraordinary confessor. In his reply he rallied her on her *extraordinary* manner of procuring an *extraordinary* and informed her that the appointment in question belonged to the Ecclesiastical Superior, she being unable to exercise any choice in the matter. But far from being displeased at her desire that he should fill the office, he plainly let her know what pleasure he felt in the prospect of acting as their spiritual father, multiplying his facetious threats of scolding and penancing, and terrifying them out of their senses.

His letters were not all written in this humorous strain. A religious himself, none knew better than he how to speak of the happiness and privileges of the religious state. "I congratulate you," he writes to one of the novices with whom he had been wont to engage in some of these merry contests of wit, "on the approach of the day when you are, *propter amorem Domini tui Jesu Christi*, to bid adieu to the world and all its pursuits and so-called pleasures, and to devote yourself to God, seeking all your happiness, even in this life, in Him alone. That you appreciate the singular favour He has shown you in calling you to Himself I doubt not, but you will better understand its inestimable value hereafter. It is like the precious pearl in the gospel, for which, if you give all you have, you have made an excellent bargain. Indeed, it is *cheating* our Lord to give our dirt for His grace, and His love, and Himself. But then He not only tolerates the cheat, but is pleased with it; and He told us the Sunday before last that He is so rich that He misses nothing of what He gives us, and

He is so good that He desires to give us all things. So give Him all your dross and trash, (yourself included,) and He will give you, what St. Agnes called *inestimabiles margaritas*." His residence at Nottingham was of no long duration, for in 1852 his increasing infirmities obliged him to resign his bishopric. Difficulties, however, presented themselves as to his future residence, and this coming to Mother Margaret's knowledge, her distress was extreme. " A prince of the Church," she exclaimed, " in difficulties about a home ! He must come to us ;" and she at once sat down and offered him a home in her convent at Stone, that he might receive the assiduous care which his age and feeble health required. He wrote a warm and grateful letter of thanks for her " great and disinterested kindness in offering to take on herself the trouble of making him comfortable in his old age and infirmities ; " but he had already accepted the proposal of the Fathers of the Birmingham Oratory that he should reside with them at Edgbaston, whence he afterwards removed to his old home, the convent at Taunton, where he continued to reside until his death in 1866. It must be added, that Mother Margaret made the same hospitable offer to Archbishop Nicholson, when he fell into infirm health. In both these cases she was solely prompted by her respect for the Episcopal office.

Bishop Hendren's successor in the see of Clifton was the Right Rev. Thomas Burgess. Mother Margaret entertained some fears as to his dispositions regarding the Community; but as often as these disquieting thoughts arose an interior voice seemed to say to her, " Wait and see." And, in point of fact, her fears proved altogether groundless, for he showed himself a most kind friend to the Community for the three years during which he occupied the see. He died at the convent at Westbury in November 1854, being attended in his sickness and his last moments by two religious from St. Catherine's convent.

Whilst these changes were taking place, the state of Mother Margaret's health was causing her Community the gravest uneasiness. From one of her own letters we gather that she was at this time dreading an attack on the brain, that painful sores had opened on her head, arms, sides, and knees, and that the doctors insisted on perfect freedom from business as affording the only chance of cure. In point of fact, fears were entertained lest her malady should result in softening of the brain ; and her weakness was so extreme that when she thought herself unobserved she would drag herself through the cloister, holding by the window seats. At length she consented to try the effect of sea-air, and by the advice of her medical attendants she set out, on the 18th of August, for Bangor, accompanied by Sister M. Teresa. She more willingly made choice of this watering-place in consequence of its vicinity to St. Winifred's Well. It was at the suggestion of her friend, Mrs. Northcote, that she determined on recommending herself to the patronage of that favoured saint—the only one of British lineage who is still invoked on her native soil, and who is, " even in this unbelieving age, still miraculous." On her way to Bangor, therefore, she stopped at Holywell, where she unexpectedly met with F. Aylward, who was staying there, and who accompanied her on her first visit to St. Winifred's Well. But for him she would probably never have found courage to have entered those icy waters ; indeed, the doing so seemed a rash experiment, for she was at that time suffering from erysipelas, which, being driven in by the shock of the water, might well have proved dangerous. But he bade her have courage, telling her he would go to the chapel and pray for her whilst she was bathing. The effect of the bath was decidedly favourable ; she felt no bad results from the suppression of the eruption, and that night had the first uninterrupted sleep which she had enjoyed for many months ; indeed, for six weeks previously she had been suffering from complete *insomnia*.

Her gratitude for this favour was of the warmest kind, and she determined, on her return from Bangor, to pay a longer visit to Holywell, for the purpose of making a Novena to St. Winifred, and taking the baths during each of the nine days.

Her health was sufficiently improved, by the sea-air of Bangor, to enable her to venture on sundry rambles amid the mountainous scenery, which was so new to her. Bishop Ullathorne was at this time in Ireland, and on his return he called at Bangor to see Mother Margaret, and took her and her companion in a carriage to see the Menai and Britannia Bridges. The Duke of Wellington had come from London the same day to inspect the Britannia Bridge, recently opened. As she stepped from the carriage, and the two bridges came in full view, she exclaimed, in her full tones, "Oh, how wonderful! *But if men do such things as these, they will begin to think they have no need of God!*" The sentiment which found utterance in these words was one to which she often gave expression. She instinctively felt that the progress of physical science, in the present day, had a certain tendency to make men forget the dominion of God. It was a temptation to bring her word of some new discovery or wonderful invention, for the sake of hearing her say something to magnify the power of God. Her words, indeed, were not, on such occasions, very complimentary to the philosophers; and, when she heard of men calculating the distance, or the size, or the weight of the sun, moon, and planets, she was commonly inclined to think that they knew nothing about it. And she even felt a certain satisfaction when some of these wonderful modern discoveries came to naught; as when, in spite of storm signals and meteorological theories, the wrecks on the English coast increased instead of diminishing in number, or when intelligence was brought of the failure of the first Transatlantic Cable. "I like these learned gentlemen to know," she would say, "that *God is Master*." The autumn of 1852

was marked by terrific storms of wind, which were particularly felt in the west of England. One night the confusion of the elements threatened to blow the convent down, and part of the roof was actually blown away. Some of the religious quitted their cells and sought refuge in the Dormitory Chapel, where they found Mother Margaret praying before Our Lady's image. As a furious gust of wind swept past the house she ejaculated, " God have mercy on the poor souls who this night go to judgment ! " and then, after a moment, she added, " but I am glad that men should know His power."

She returned to Holywell, as she had proposed, beginning her Novena to St. Winifred on the 8th of September, the Feast of Our Lady's Nativity. The Community at Clifton united heartily in this Novena ; and some of them remembered the expeditious manufacture of a certain picture of the saint, which was fashioned and framed, in the course of one afternoon, by Sisters Francis Raphael and Mary Gabriel, for the devotion of the Sisters. Happily they were not critical judges ; and the picture, inartistic as it was, was carried in procession at the beginning and end of their Novena, many pious prayers being said before it for the recovery of their Mother's health. As to Mother Margaret herself, the devotion she experienced at Holywell was of no ordinary kind. Exactly what passed in her soul there we do not know ; but, from the little she ever said on the subject, it would seem to have been one of those seasons of spiritual consolation which, with her, were extremely rare. Probably no one has ever visited Holywell as a pilgrim without feeling something of this ; for the evidence of miraculous power is so overwhelming, to all but those who will not see, as to give a sort of sensible character to faith. And, besides the bodily cures daily wrought there, we should be tempted to affirm that St. Winifred dispenses another order of gifts to her clients, and that among them is the gift of spiritual joy. It is quite certain that Mother Margaret was visited with some such ray of sun-

shine: she used to say that "it clipped something in her soul that wanted clipping, and had hitherto been a hindrance to her." The sight of the ragged and suffering pilgrims from all parts of England, Ireland, and even America, crossing themselves and praying aloud ere they entered the healing waters, and of the crutches and other votive offerings suspended, among the antique tracery above the niche, by those who had come there maimed and diseased and had departed sound, was a consolation to her faith. "To see such things in *England!*" she exclaimed; "it is like a Catholic country." "You must come here, and look at this wonderful well," she writes to a friend; "if it is not miraculous, it is at least one of the wonderful works of God. I could look at it for ever; but at present you cannot be there for many minutes, for the quantity of people of all sorts, Protestants as well as Catholics, with all sorts of diseases. And yet they will not believe its real cause; they say it is wonderful water, and that is all: I am almost in a passion with them!" She revisited Holywell on two other occasions, being both times accompanied by Sister M. Teresa, who writes as follows: "I had the happiness of twice accompanying our dearest Mother to St. Winifred's Well. I remember the first time she entered the water she was very timid; but she immediately made the sign of the Cross, and prayed with such faith and fervour that it moved all who saw her. Once when we were there a poor paralytic woman was brought to the well; it was beautiful to see our Mother kneeling by the well, praying aloud to St. Winifred for the cure of this poor creature. I could not help thinking, at the time, how like the scene before me was to what we so often read of in the Gospels." After her visit to Holywell, Mother Margaret endeavoured to propagate the devotion to St. Winifred by every means in her power. She induced many persons to visit the holy well, or to use the moss or water of St. Winifred—among others, the Most Rev. Master-General, who, in his last

visit to England, made a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to Holywell; and when the church at Stone was in course of erection, she had one of the side chapels dedicated to St. Winifred, and caused a little font to be placed in it, which is kept constantly supplied with water from the well, and is often resorted to by the people.

From Holywell, Mother Margaret proceeded to Staffordshire, visiting St. Benedict's Priory, on her way to Longton. Here she was met by Sisters M. Francis and Imelda from Clifton, and a joyful meeting it was. They had parted from her feeble and suffering, and they beheld her now, after a month's separation, looking better and stronger than was her wont. One of them, then a young religious, and a favoured child, could not restrain her happiness at the change; and was often afterwards rallied by the good nuns of St. Benedict's for the rapture of her first greeting. Mother Margaret was always at home under this hospitable roof, and the days spent in its sacred seclusion brought her true refreshment of spirit. Towards the venerable Prioress she entertained sentiments of affectionate reverence, and their intercourse was truly heart to heart. The very house, so truly the home of the Blessed Sacrament, was on that account dear to her, and if there were anything in the world that she envied, it was the privilege of those whose happy vocation permitted them to keep up the uninterrupted adoration of their Lord. Her present journey into Staffordshire had been undertaken with a particular purpose. The Father-General, during his stay in England, had expressed his wish that the Novitiate House might be transferred to the diocese of Birmingham. This had always been Mother Margaret's intention, and preparatory steps had even been taken for establishing the Novitiate at Longton. But experience proved that Longton was altogether unfit for the purpose. It presented a great field for active labour, but was not the place in which to train young religious. As Mother Mar-

garet pithily expressed it, "They would *hear* nothing but sin, and *see* nothing but mud." Moreover, every effort that had been made to procure land in this neighbourhood had failed, all being in the hands of great proprietors, who refused to sell an acre. An offer, however, was made about this time by Mr. James Beech, of an acre and a half of land situated at Stone; and this circumstance finally determined the establishment of the Novitiate House in that locality. Stone, although within an easy distance of the whole Pottery District, is itself a healthy country town, free alike from smoke and potsherds, and not densely peopled by a factory population. The offer was therefore gratefully accepted, and Mother Margaret went over from Longton to inspect her new possession. It consisted of a field and piece of garden ground, forming a portion of the site of the present convent. It was not altogether without its historical associations. For not to speak of the Saxon saints Wulfhad and Rufin, whose martyrdom there in early times sanctified the soil, and whose shrine in the great Priory, erected by their father, King Wulfhere, became a place of popular pilgrimage, and so gave birth to the town of Stone, there are Catholic associations nearer to our own days, which are not without their interest. Within this field, near the spot occupied by the garden gate, Father Dominic, the Passionist, preached his first sermon to an English audience, his only pulpit being a cart. His first Community was established at Aston Hall, near Stone, where the Passionist Fathers still resided at the time of which we speak, and the whole neighbourhood had been the scene of his active missionary labours. To provide for the wants of the Catholics of Stone, whose numbers were then but limited, the Fathers had procured the erection of a school-chapel dedicated to St. Anne, a simple and picturesque little building designed by the elder Pugin, and standing on a plot of land which now forms the burial-ground of the convent. When F. Dominic's lamented death took place

in the year 1849, his body was brought from Reading, where he died, to Stone, and deposited for the night in St. Anne's Chapel. The respect in which he was held was testified by the public attendance at his funeral. The body was carried from Stone to Aston, a distance of two miles, the funeral procession, headed by cross-bearer and thurifer, the attendant clergy being vested in their surplices, and chanting aloud the office of the dead, and the celebrant, deacon and sub-deacon, wearing their black cope and dalmatics. In this manner the funeral train passed through the public streets of Stone, which were crowded by hundreds of spectators, not one of whom uttered a disrespectful word. We may add that, after the lapse of many years, the memory of this good religious is still cherished with respect in the town, where many long survived who owed their conversion to his missionary zeal.

Mother Margaret was accompanied on her first visit to Stone by his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne, as well as by several of her religious. "I well remember," writes the former, "her delight on first visiting this property. She saw at last a space in which to expand. It was in October, and the apple-tree now standing before the window of the room she was wont to occupy, was richly laden with fruit. A basketful was taken to Clifton, as a specimen of the produce of their future home." This apple-tree was threatened with destruction when the builders came upon the ground, but was happily spared, and always bore the name of "Our Mother's Tree." The birds that resorted to it became in after years the object of her special benevolence : they were fed by her in the winter, and protected from wandering cats in summer time. The tree, moreover, had another and a sweeter association. In the Corpus Christi processions, the last station was always made at an altar erected beneath its branches. It was Mother Margaret's favourite station, and she desired that the antiphons sung there should always be in honour of the Blessed Virgin ; for she

associated it in her mind with two verses from the Canticle of Canticles : " As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons : as the lily among thorns, so is my Beloved among the daughters."[1]

The establishment at Stone was not by any means intended to supersede that at Longton, and Mother Margaret frequently visited the latter place, to direct and encourage the work of the religious. A few anecdotes have been preserved regarding these visits. On one occasion she happened to arrive there on the eve of a contested election. As has been before said, with all her shrewd knowledge of the world, she was in some matters as innocent as a child, and politics were always to her a subject of profound mystification. Going out one morning on some charitable errand, she had no sooner got outside the garden-gate than she found herself confronted by two men wearing huge blue cockades, who saluted her with the query, " Are you *blue* ?" " What do you mean ? " she inquired, in some alarm. " I mean, ma'am,' said one, " that you can't pass here unless you 'll cry, ' For *Jones*,' " (or whatever was the name of the popular candidate.) " Oh, I'll cry ' For Jones,' or whatever you like," she replied, " if you'll only let me cross the street." " All right, Bill," said the man, who was of course indulging in a piece of electioneering pleasantry, " *they're for Jones !* " and to Mother Margaret's surprise she found herself politely escorted across the road, and through some pugnacious-looking knots of men, by the two blue cockaders.

Political phraseology was almost as much an unknown tongue to her as the language of the Court, and her simplicity in regard of both was often irresistibly entertaining. " They tell me —— has been made a K.C.B.," she once said : " now, what does that mean, my dear ? Is it anything *good* ? " And, writing from Longton, she communicated to her Clifton Sisters the fact, just related to

[1] Cant. ii. 3, 2.

her, that the brother of a priest there was "*a bitter Orange-man.*" "I never knew what an *Orange-man* meant before," she writes: "let it be given out at the Rosary to pray for the conversion of a *bitter Orange-man*, the brother of a priest. I think it will make him ill."

Her visits to Longton often gave her opportunities of personally exercising her apostolic zeal. At Clifton much of her time was taken up in the parlour, and she was forced almost entirely to resign to her Sisters those labours among the poor in which she had hitherto taken so active a part. But at Longton she came in closer contact with the working classes. The facility she possessed in reaching and touching a soul was as remarkable as her method. There was no circumlocution about it—she at once went straight to the point. The wife of one of the factory class, who had made a little money and risen from the ranks, came once to the convent at Longton, where she wished to place a child at school. She was a Protestant, and wholly destitute of education, and, ringing at the bell, she asked to see "the Lady." Mother Margaret went to the door, and heard her statement, that she and her husband "had no learning," but that they wished their daughter to have some learning, and desired, therefore, that she might be received in the pension-school. The conversation was accidentally overheard by one who has narrated the incident. Mother Margaret waived for the moment the question of "learning," and asked her visitor, "Do you go to any place of worship?" "No, ma'am." "Does your husband?" "No, ma'am." "Do you know that you have got a soul, and that you must take care of it?" "Yes, ma'am." "Then bring your husband with you, and come and see me again. I want to talk to you, and I'll take your child." The result of this conversation is not known, though probably enough it ended in a conversion. This was her general style of opening the siege. She did not deal in controversy, but she seized the attention of her hearers, and put before them

in strong, simple terms, God and the soul, heaven and hell, —the truths of eternity. An artisan from Birmingham once came to Stone to finish some work in the church, and Mother Margaret, after settling what was to be done, fixed her eye on him, and asked him if he were a Catholic. The man answered he was not. "What do you do for your soul—I suppose you know you have got one?" "Well, ma'am, I suppose I have." "Do you ever go to church?" "I can't say I do." When they had got thus far, the Sister who was present, seeing the turn the conversation was taking, thought it best to retire, and went to dinner, leaving Mother Margaret and her catechumen together. Presently she entered the refectory with a glowing countenance, and whispered to the Sister, "Go and take that man a Catechism and a 'Garden of the Soul,' and give him the address of a priest in Birmingham." The Sister obeyed, and found the poor fellow kneeling before one of the altars, weeping like a child. All his John Bull reserve had vanished. "No one," he said, "ever seemed before to care whether I had got a soul."

It would be hard to say precisely what gave her this power of piercing through the thick rhinoceros skin of indifference, and awakening the dormant religious sense. If you weighed and analysed her words, they were simple enough. It was the living energy of faith that went with them and touched the soul. "I felt," says one person to whom she had addressed a letter of spiritual advice, "as if out of the paper came forth into my soul some living force." And a secular whom she visited and consoled in his last illness, remarked when she left him, "What a woman that is! She would put life into a dead body." She possessed that power, the special appanage of great souls of communicating herself to others. She *had* the faith and she *gave* it. She never argued, and she never compromised the truth. On one occasion a Protestant clergyman, calling at the Clifton Convent, tried to engage

her in controversy, and finding his efforts useless, he politely said, on taking leave," Well, well, in spite of our differences, I trust we shall both one day see the Lord Jesus." " No, sir," replied Mother Margaret, " you'll never see Him unless you are a Catholic, for there is no salvation out of the Catholic Church." The gentleman observed that she was very severe. " Well, sir," she said, " I can't argue, I have not the power ; but that is the truth. You'll never see God unless you are a Catholic ; and I have nothing more to say." This person afterwards became a Catholic, and used to say Mother Margaret's downright words made him think more than any books he ever read. Even when she did not convert she could terrify. One person was in the habit of occasionally visiting her, who was more or less infected with the semi-infidelity of the day. On taking leave of him at their last interview, she said, fixing her eyes steadily on his countenance, " Don't you forget that the Blood of a God has been shed for your soul." The words were said in so solemn and impressive a manner that he to whom they were addressed was observed to turn ashy pale.

At Longton she was content to spread all nets to catch souls. One of the religious wrote to her at Clifton, asking what they were to say to the factory girls as to the lawfulness of going to *dancing* houses ; she replied as follows : " You must teach the people to leave their sins, and do penance for them. Never encourage them to go to any of those places. We must pray and do penance for their sins as well as our own, and draw down the blessing of God on this most wicked country." But she well knew that souls must be drawn " by the cords of Adam." So she permitted the girls to assemble for little tea parties from time to time in the field attached to the convent, and these meetings, which afforded them an innocent recreation, quite made up for those which she required them to abandon.

The house at Longton, like that in Queen's Square, enjoyed the reputation of being haunted. The Community was often disturbed by nocturnal noises, which were at length traced to their cause, namely, an echo arising from some peculiarity in the building. Rats likewise abounded in the cellars, which were full of water; and the garden was equally prolific in frogs. One of the pupils, who had heard of French people eating frogs, conceived the idea of catching some, and preparing a dish *à la Française*. This reached Mother Margaret's ears at Clifton, and elicited a strong prohibition. Her tender-heartedness for the animal creation took alarm, and she wrote, "There must be no frogs brought to the convent; nor must the people be allowed to suppose that we eat them. Besides, it is cruel to cut their legs off alive. If N—— does it again she must be punished. It would be an obstacle to her ever being a religious." The mention of the *rats* likewise suggests an anecdote. One of the circumstances that rendered Clifton Convent so unsuitable as the Novitiate House was its very confined space. The small piece of garden was quite insufficient for exercise, and the restraint was often severely felt by those who came fresh from the world. A postulant, Sister Francis Raphael Drane, who had been accustomed to free country life and country amusements, suffered greatly from the want of exercise, and at length confessed to Mother Margaret that at times the depression it caused was so trying that she would be glad of anything by way of a change, "even a rat hunt." We can imagine religious superiors with whom such an avowal would for ever have sealed the vocation of the poor postulant; but Mother Margaret had large powers of toleration, and her face only expanded into a beaming smile. "Rats, is it?" she said; "oh, if that is your taste, Longton is the very place for you; the cellars are full of them." During her next visit to Longton she did not forget her rat-hunting postulant, and wrote her a lit-

tle note, in which with her usual felicity, she contrived to give another turn to the subject, " I have not forgotten you and your rats ; there are plenty here waiting till you are professed ; but I hope by that time, my dear child, that you will have learnt *to hunt souls*, and will have found the pleasure of catching them for our Divine Master." " She understood youth," writes Bishop Ullathorne, " and loved young people so much that she seemed to have a part of her life within them. Every one about her knew how full her heart was when she talked of ' those young things,' alluding to her young novices and juniors." She always showed great compassion for the trials of young religious, which she lessened by her sympathy ; and she often longed for a field in which, to use her own expression, " they could run about like colts." Stone possessed the advantage of larger space for exercise, and on first coming there she charged the Novice Mistress to mind and let the young ones play at ball, and sometimes to play with them. At Clifton she once had reason to think that the want of exercise was seriously felt by the Novices, some of whom were at that time very young, and that it was producing an injurious kind of depression. She therefore proclaimed a Recreation day, and gave up the cloisters for their amusement. She made it a condition that all were to *play* in real earnest, and came in person to see that her wishes on this head were carried into execution. She found a group of Novices engaged with a game, the point of which consisted in blindfolding one of the party, who was seated in a chair, then forming a ring round her, and obliging her to guess and name any member of it whom she could touch with her wand. Mother Margaret insisted on being the one blindfolded, and taking her seat in the midst of her children, she entered into the game with as much hearty earnestness as if she had nothing more weighty to think of. This little anecdote may perhaps seem but trifling, but never in the eyes of those who witnessed the

scene did their Mother's venerable countenance appear more venerable.

After taking possession of the ground at Stone, an additional piece of land, with some cottages on it, was purchased by the Community. The cottages were turned into a residence for one or two of the Sisters, who came over from Longton, and took charge of the poor school at Stone during the week, returning to Longton for Sunday. Mother Margaret's correspondence at this time is full of plans regarding the new foundation. "I have a convent in my head" she writes, "but I fear no person will ever understand it." Her feelings of fear regarding the new undertaking which lay before her find expression in several letters. "I have been suffering from great depression," she says, "and anxiety about temporal things. I try to think that all is right, and am convinced our Lord will accomplish His own work, but it is an interior martyrdom. It always is so when I have to act, trusting in Divine Providence alone; and it is just as it should be, for our good God knows it is best for me to work without any consolation." This letter was written in the March of 1852, and in the August of the same year the first stone was laid of St. Dominic's Convent.

CHAPTER VIII

1852-1854

THE year 1852 was memorable in the annals of the Community as one of expansion. The commencement at Stone of another convent, with all the attendant anxieties of building, would at all times have been a sufficiently grave undertaking; but how completely it was in this case a work of faith and obedience may be judged from the fact that at the time the contract for the new works was signed, the expenses of the building at Clifton were not yet defrayed. But the decision to begin at once was urged on her by superiors, and in a letter to Clifton, written from Longton, she assigns this as her motive for commencing without delay. As we have seen, it was not without anxiety. "It is quite a blessing," she writes, "to have Exposition to-day; *I have so much to talk to our Lord about.* Prayer is our only help; He will refuse us nothing if we are but faithful in this duty." But, as usual, temporal anxieties had no power to cool her liberality, and in the brief notes of this year's events occurs the notice of two orphans taken as a present to Our Lady on one of her Feasts; this being the usual way in which Mother Margaret sought, after the same fashion as the Abbé Carron, "to draw down dew from heaven." At this moment she was greatly perplexed where to find the necessary funds for defraying the new expenses to which she had pledged herself. It was after consulting on the subject with one of her

Religious that she came to her with a beaming countenance exclaiming, " I have thought of what I will do ! " The Sister to whom she spoke waited for an explanation, fully expecting to hear that she was going to beg or borrow of somebody. But that was not Mother Margaret's way. " I will make Our Lady a present of two children on her Feast ! " she said ; and the two children were accordingly received. Nor was she disappointed in her hopes of thus winning the blessing of heaven : for in no year did the Community receive a greater increase of members and of means than in this. In fact, as Mother Margaret often remarked, Almighty God seemed always to expect her to make some sort of venture for Him, and then to come to her aid. " If I do nothing," she would say, " I get nothing ; " and it generally happened that she began each fresh undertaking with no other resource than her boundless confidence in Providence, the means being supplied in one way or another, whilst the work was still in progress. The rapid accession of postulants raised the numbers at Clifton to twenty-two, and as the convent had only been built for twenty, they had already outgrown its limits. In the month of May his Eminence Cardinal Wiseman came to Clifton for the purpose of preaching a charity sermon on behalf of the Convent of the Good Shepherd, and during his stay he paid a brief visit to St. Catherine's. He was received at the door with every solemnity, and conducted to a chair of state prepared in the Cloister, where all the Community in turn knelt and kissed his ring, and received his blessing. He afterwards met the Religious in the Community-room, and entertained them with his accustomed affability. The ceremonious manner of his reception, so expressive of Mother Margaret's veneration for a Prince of the Church, was in accordance with Catholic usage ; but on his next visit to Clifton, some years later, his Eminence took the Community by surprise, and entered the convent when they were unprepared. This was his first personal

introduction to Mother Margaret, but he already knew her by reputation, and her hospitable invitation to Bishop Hendren, of which mention has been made in the last chapter, drew from his Eminence an expression of admiration for her noble character, and a letter of courteous acknowledgment.

In the spring of this year, also, began a closer intimacy with the Fathers of the Birmingham Oratory, who were at that time involved in the troubles of the Achilli trial. Many and earnest were the prayers offered in Mother Margaret's Communities for their success in that cause, and we must also add, for the conversion of the unhappy apostate. For they at least could not forget the religious habit he had once worn,—the religious vows he had once professed ; " I am praying much to St. Thomas Aquinas for poor Achilli," writes Mother Margaret on the feast of that great Saint : she prayed for his defeat in the courts of justice, but not without impetrating grace for him from the Eternal Judge.

The result of the trial is known to everyone, and was felt by Mother Margaret, as by all Catholics, as a disappointment ; but few events in this world are unmixed evils, and the frequent correspondence with the Birmingham Oratory, which grew out of this business, ripened the acquaintance which Mother Margaret had already formed with its respected Superior into friendship—a friendship she cherished to the latest hour of her life, and to which she was accustomed to give expression with her characteristic heartiness and simplicity. St. Philip Neri, " the kind old man," as she called him, was one of her favourite saints, and she loved and honoured all his sons, who have done so much in England for God and for souls. But specially did she love their first Father and Founder in this country ; and we cannot refrain from mentioning one way in which she showed her affectionate interest in his behalf. Some newspaper gossip on one occasion made

very free use of Dr. Newman's name, and drew from his pen a letter in which he made a noble profession of his unalterable attachment to the Catholic faith; Mother Margaret was so delighted at the terms in which this letter was conceived that she cut it out of the paper and kept it in a little leathern purse, which contained a few rare treasures, and which she always carried about her, and here it was discovered after her death.

Nor can we refuse ourselves the pleasure of quoting the affectionate words in which she expresses her friendship for her "Oratorian Fathers and Brothers," as she calls them; "We do pray for you all," she says, "for I feel as if the sons of St. Philip were part of myself: all that touches them touches me to the quick." Sometimes she gave utterance to the same feeling in a more playful way One of the Fathers having offered to lend her a valuable picture of St. Philip, at a time when the Community were about to make a Novena to that saint for the recovery of a sick sister, she writes, "Thanks for the offer of St. Philip; we will receive him with joy, for the dear old man's face always gives me confidence. He seems to understand me, which few of the masculine sex do. He and his sons are exceptions."

During the Novena of the Immaculate Conception four sisters were in retreat for their clothing and four for their profession; qualified, in Mother Margaret's pithy style, as "all with good wills, and not two of them alike." "I look round with surprise," she adds, "and think of the grain of mustard seed. We must think how to spiritualize all these young ones." And what, it may be asked, was her method of spiritualizing those under her care? To answer such a question precisely would require lengthy treatment; but, glancing over her letters, and calling to mind the general tenor of her instructions, we should be disposed to reduce her system of religious training to two heads—the exact observance of the Constitutions of the Order, and the prac-

tice of an interior life. She valued the first like a true daughter of St. Dominic; and in her later years particularly, her letters overflowed with exhortations and prayers, that the rule might everywhere be observed "to the letter." But still more did she value an interior spirit, without which even the most rigid exterior observance is but a body devoid of soul. "I wish you would, in a particular manner, pray for my soul," she writes; "for, in the midst of this multiplicity of works and women, I fear lest, through my remissness, much may go wrong. They want more spiritual food than I can give them; for I feel more than ever, that unless the religious women of the present day are more led to an interior and spiritual life, many, many evils will arise. If the head and the body are always at work, and the heart left untrained and untaught, self will be the object, and not God. God seems to me less thought of in these days by Religious than formerly; all are employed about their neighbour; but fasts, feasts, and other observances are laid aside, because Religious have not time to serve God, they have so much to do with their neighbour. Do pray, and work with us, that God, and God alone, may be our aim."

God alone—this was the key-note of all her teaching. The words flowed from her pen and from her lips on all occasions; there is hardly one of her spiritual letters in which they do not recur. "Let us pray, let us love, let us live for *God alone*. Let a holy jealousy take possession of us, keeping all our thoughts, words, and works for *Him alone*." Truly, if any were to ask in what Mother Margaret's idea of the interior life consisted, no better answer could be given than the words of her favourite motto—*God alone*. She meant by it the surrender of the whole heart, and the whole intention; the single eye directed to God as a motive; the single heart opened to embrace Him as its end; the single will and purpose to live for His service, and to seek His glory before all things. Much as she cared for

the active works of charity, they were, after all, but the husk ; there was a spirit that must animate them, or she prized them very lightly. How often did she remind her children of this, and warn them, lest, through want of a pure intention and guard of the heart, they might be labouring all the day, and have nothing really to offer to God at its close ! How often, in her homely impressive language, did she urge on them to sanctify their work with prayer, raising their hearts to God by means of some simple ejaculation as they went about their ordinary occupations ! She was even jealous lest exterior works, however useful, should be overvalued, so as to steal away the heart from God. " I am glad for your sake," she writes to a Religious in charge of some schools, " that the examinations are over ; but I should be much more satisfied if you were less anxious, and only tried to keep the peace of your soul. We often lose the reward of our labour by our human view of things. A want of purity of intention often corrupts our best works. I only say this to guard you, my dear child ; for God alone is the only object we should try to please. He is the Giver of the power to teach, to work, to see, to hear, to read, and to speak. Did He deprive us of one of these faculties, what could we do ? Be grateful, then, to this most loving God, and try, if possible, to return love for love."

She was not altogether dissatisfied if sometimes the Religious engaged in the schools met with mortifying disappointments. " I am glad of it," she remarked on one such occasion, when the half-yearly examiners expressed dissatisfaction at the state of certain classes ; " it will teach you that your Sisters are *nuns*, not *schoolmistresses*." Sometimes she herself gave her children a practical lesson of mortification on this head. Entering an elementary school one day she desired Sister Catherine Angela Tomkinson who was teaching a class to question the children before her. The subject was Bible history ;

and one of the questions being, " Where did Abraham come from ? " a small boy called out, with some satisfaction, " From Mesopotamia." " What a big word ! " said Mother Margaret : " now, I'll ask him some questions " ; so she asked him if he liked plum-pudding for dinner, and more to the same effect, and then left the class. The next time she came the children were repeating by heart the Latin hymns of the Blessed Sacrament, and were getting through them at rather a rapid rate. She sat down and asked them how much they understood of what they were saying, and then gave them a beautiful instruction on these hymns, and the reverence with which they should be recited. " It made me feel," writes the Sister, " how little I understood of the real spirit in which these children should be trained."

It was the same with every kind of work, whether mental or material. No one better liked to have things done, and well done ; but the intention of the heart was her first thought. Once when the same Religious was engaged upon the embroidery of a vestment, which took her many months of hard work, Mother Margaret gave her so many humiliations over it, that at last she could not bear the sight of it. Some time afterwards it was exhibited in her presence to some guests, who expressed their admiration. " Our Mother," she writes, " turned aside to me with a smile, and whispered, " You can bear all the fine things they say about it *now*." And she did the same on many similar occasions, so anxious was she that every work should be done for God alone. A large banner was once made in the convent, closely embroidered all over, but not very effective. The artist proposed, in case another were made like it, to save time and trouble by working a handsome centre, and placing it on a woven ground. " You forget, child," observed Mother Margaret, " *that all that multitude of stitches give glory to God*."

It would be impossible to give all the anecdotes that

night be quoted on this subject, or the manifold ingenious ways she took for purifying the intention of her children over their active work. One of the special objects of her dislike was anything approaching a *hobby*. "Never be absorbed in anything," was her constant admonition to those in whom she thought she detected such a propensity, and Sister M. Imelda Poole, possessed of strong musical tastes, declares that our Mother made her go the way of the cross over everything connected with music, till she positively hated the pursuit. Once when, as chantress, she was endeavouring to intone the Vesper hymn, "Verbum Supernum" to a difficult tune, she broke down, and was obliged to give it up and begin another. After Vespers, Mother Margaret alluded to the circumstance with an expression of satisfaction. "I was so delighted," she said, "that you could not sing that hymn!" When once, however, she was satisfied that the heart was free, she had no further solicitude—they might work, teach, play, sing, draw, write, read, and the more the better: she required only that it should be *all for God*. A precious maxim of hers has been preserved by a Religious of another Order, to whom she uttered it: "If God is in your heart, your work will never drive Him out of it." But if she saw in any a disposition to over-estimate the *work* of the Community before its *sanctification*, she hastened to apply a remedy. Here are her words to a local superioress, whose zeal she sought to restrain: "All excitement springs from ungoverned nature. God is found in peace and silence, and one prayer from a contrite, humble spirit will do more than a great deal of talk. Our Sisters have not too much time to give to God and to their own souls. I want no more active work for them than to do properly what they have begun. Let them all have time to study what belongs to their Rule and Constitutions: it is by that they will be judged."

She equally cherished this purity of intention in herself;

and the Religious who enjoyed her fullest confidence, and was associated the most closely with her daily life, has borne witness to her wonderful perfection in the practice of this virtue. She also records the dread which our Mother habitually entertained lest the affection which her children entertained for her person should mingle with, and tarnish the purity of their work for God. Those who betrayed any such human feeling had often much to suffer till they were *weaned*, as she called it. Some of her words, when lying on her death-bed, mark how deep a hold this principle had on her soul. "There are some of you," she said, "who have been too much attached to me, and now God is crucifying you in your tenderest part by seeing me suffer. One of our Sisters once said that she did things to please me, and I said that God would remove me if I were an obstacle to your purity of intention." At another time, during the same illness, she said, "God has blessed us with a singular unity and mutual love—not that I ever sought the affections of one of you. I can say with truth I have not that to reproach myself with." And she often said that, in regard of human affection, she lived "in a press," meaning the continual effort she made to restrain her natural feelings. One anecdote on the same subject deserves recording. She happened to arrive at one of the smaller houses after the celebration of a great feast, and the sacristan, Sister M. Hyacinth Stone, who was then very young in religion, expressed her regret at our Mother's absence on the feast-day, for which she had been expected, adding that she had taken particular pains in decorating the altar in hopes she would see it. The words struck Mother Margaret with a kind of horror; it seemed to her nothing short of sacrilege to have any other motive in the soul when decorating God's altar than the desire to please and glorify Him. She reproved the Sister severely, and immediately removed her from the office of sacristan; nor would she allow her to fill it again for several years, and not then, until she was

thoroughly persuaded that time and this severe lesson had wrought a change, and that she would labour in it purely for the glory of God.

This purity of intention was closely linked in her own soul with a detachment from creatures, the more remarkable when we remember her strong nature and ardent feelings. Tenderly as she could love, there was no living being on whom she leant or depended. The mere suggestion that she could do so, or that she would miss or feel the want of this or that person, removed by death or otherwise, would move her to a strong denial. " Never go to say that your Mother would lean on any creature," were her words on one such occasion. " I could never love anything much that would not last for ever," was another of her frequent sayings. And again, " I could not trust in man if I were to try." " The foundation of her spiritual life," says Bishop Ullathorne, " was recollection in God, that true recollection which implies detachment from the creature. This detachment from the creature, this abstraction from self, and this centring of the soul on God, formed the basis of Mother Margaret's character. In her this aversion from self and conversion to her Creator were carried to a degree, and were manifested with a constancy of habit, which it would be difficult to make another comprehend who was not acquainted with her interior life." On her birthday in 1862 she wrote : " The only prayer I have made for myself is that I may never think of any creature, save in God alone." And one of her instructions to her Sisters runs as follows : " Those who are united to God in prayer enjoy a heaven on earth. Practise continual silence, shut up your eyes and ears against all curiosity, and you will see and speak with God. Aim at pure and perfect love, for where there is true love, there will always be the greatest desire for the salvation of souls." In addition to the supernatural principle of " God alone," which ran through her whole spiritual life, this detachment had been fostered by the

character of her providential training. Even by nature, warm as were her feelings, she resembled rather the strong oak than the clinging ivy, and hardly comprehended the necessity which weaker souls feel to rest for support on others. Her early orphanhood, the rough treatment she had received in her youth, and the necessity imposed on her of acting for herself and making her way in spite of obstacles that would have daunted a weaker soul, had been among the providential causes which produced this result.[1] Others leant for support on her, but for herself she leant on God alone. " Never lean on any one," were her words on her death-bed ; " it must be God and yourself." Nature and grace, therefore, had co-operated to detach her from human ties, and, without impairing the tenderness of her heart for every form of human suffering, to place it in perfect freedom. Hence, in her guidance of others, she set great store on this point of detachment, and strenuously laboured to establish in the souls of her religious children a perfect *whole-heartedness* towards God ; and the jealousy she felt lest any portion of their affections should be given to the creature gave its colour to her whole spiritual training ; for it was her favourite maxim, that " nothing solid is done in the spiritual life without detachment from creatures."

From what has been said it will be readily understood why Mother Margaret so often repudiated the character of an *active order* attributed, in common parlance, to her Institute. " She wisely held," said Bishop Ullathorne, " that such a combination of the active with interior life as her

[1] " A kind mutual dependence often prevents the development of some great individual power which would be forced into action by a state of abandonment. I lately happened to notice an ivy, which, finding nothing to cling to beyond a certain point, had shot off into a bold elastic stem, with an air of as much independence as any branch of oak. So a human being, thrown, whether by cruelty, justice, or accident, from social support and kindness, if he have any vigour of spirit, will begin to act for himself with a resolution which appears like a new faculty."—Foster, *Essay on Decision of Character.*

Congregation presented was as well adapted for contemplation, in favour of those whom God calls to it, as any inclosed house would be. Speaking to the juniors and novices in 1864 of the temptations which some young persons get in active orders, who think that if they were in a purely contemplative convent they would have more time for prayer, she says, 'A sentence of St. John of the Cross has struck me more than anything I have read for a long time. It is this—"Work, suffer, and be silent." I assure you I look upon it as our motto. It has been such a help to me wherever I have been since. Contemplation does not mean kneeling down and saying long prayers, but it means the union of the soul with God. Who ever reached a higher degree of contemplation than St. John of the Cross? And yet was there ever a more active saint, labouring from morning till night to gain souls? You see then that those who lead most active lives can be contemplatives; and, indeed, I hope and feel that many of our Sisters have already attained to a high degree of contemplation.' As a general rule," continues the same writer, "Mother Margaret considered the union of active work with contemplation as much safer than a life where no outlet is given to the restlessness of nature, no safety-valve left open for the riddance of morbidities which are apt to gather from time to time where life is wholly secluded and concentrated within. Nor was she uninstructed in that doctrine which is so eminently Dominican, that the most perfect life is that which most completely imitates God, who is always contemplating and always acting for the good of His creatures." The Superioress of another Community having once asked her the secret of the unity which prevailed in her congregation, "My Sisters," she replied, "are all so busy, they have no time for sin and selfishness. I like to see them go to bed thoroughly tired." But though she valued the active work of the Community, both for its own utility and as a means of promoting the sanctification of

those engaged in it, she could not endure that it should be regarded either by the world or by her religious children themselves, as the main object of her Institute. Hence, in the translation of the Constitutions made for the use of her congregation, she would never allow any point of religious observance to be sacrificed for the sake of work. Certain points, which chiefly regarded the arrangement of hours, were regulated so as to suit the convenience of those engaged in active duties, but neither in the austerity nor the obligation of the rule would she admit of any mitigations. The necessity of such mitigations was often strongly urged on her in the commencement of her foundation, but without avail; and as time went on, so far from altering her judgment on this point, the development of the Community was all in the other direction. For several years, indeed, the Office of Our Lady was substituted for the Divine Office, which latter was only recited on greater feasts; but the number of these feasts went on annually increasing, and provision was distinctly made in the Constitutions for saying the Divine Office exclusively, whenever circumstances should permit. Mother Margaret's own desire ever was that the Divine Office should be daily recited in all her convents; she yielded her wishes on the point to the judgment of Superiors who deemed it prudent to delay; but two years before her death she had the happiness of receiving the required permission to complete the spiritual edifice she had reared, by what she rightly called its "crown."

In the matter of prayer she was not an advocate for enforcing one system to be taught in the novitiate to the exclusion of any other. Certain manuals were, however, always used in the novitiate, such as St. Peter of Alcantara's "Treatise on Prayer," which we find from her correspondence was the book given by Dr. Ullathorne for the study of the first Sisters at Coventry. When, at a later period, she became acquainted with the works of Père

Rigoleuc, she enjoined their use in the novitiate, and particularly his two treatises entitled, *L'Homme d'oraison*, and *La Garde du cœur*, and had an English translation of them made, in order that all might benefit by their instructions.

Her own instructions on prayer were as simple as they were forcible. She could not comprehend religious persons requiring a book to enable them to converse with God. "To use a book all the time of meditation," she said, "is very idle. You will never attain any degree of union with God unless you practise prayer and meditation. The time of meditation is to be a time of *work*, a time for laying all your wants before our Lord, and asking His grace for all your needs. If you could do nothing else all the time but say to our Lord—'Lord, teach me to pray; Lord, teach me humility,' the time would be well spent. Nay, if for three or four years you were to spend the whole time in saying, 'Lord, teach me to pray,' you would make a very good prayer." And, again, "All lessons are best learnt before the Tabernacle. We cannot learn humility better than by gazing at that little, lowly, humble place, and thinking that our God is there, so silent, so humble, so recollected, yet always working for the salvation of our souls. We need no books; the fewer books the better. Go often before the Tabernacle; take the image of your crucified God into your hands, and you will learn everything."

In this, as in all else, however, allowance must be made for her strong manner of asserting a principle, which taken alone, would often mislead. What she really meant to discourage was the turning meditation into spiritual reading; for she always permitted the use of books, and at times used them herself. She desired that all freedom should be allowed to each one's attraction. "If one word suffice for your prayer," she writes to a young religious, "keep to that word, and whatever short sentence will unite your heart with God. He is not found in multiplicity, but in simplicity of thoughts and words. We medi-

tate to find God, but if our soul goes to Him immediately we put ourselves in prayer, we need no images, for we have the reality. I never could reason or make an imaginary scene in my life, and that is why the Exercises of St. Ignatius do not suit me. Whilst I was trying to form a scene, I could ask for grace and mercy for the whole world, and for myself too. We are not all formed alike, and God is glorified by the variety of His creatures, so that, however holy one practice may be for one soul, it would not lead another to God, and yet all are good and holy. If our dear Lord lives in the centre of the soul (as He really does,) what need have His spouses to look for Him elsewhere ? There He is, to hear and to grant all we ask ; again, when we are before our God in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, *what need we anything else but to look and ask ?* "

One little expression in the above beautiful extract recalls the occasion which first made it familiar to her. A little tract on devotion to the Sacred Heart was once put into her hands, in which occurred the following words, being, in part, a translation from St. Catherine of Siena : —" *There He is*, all God, all man, hidden under the whiteness of a little piece of bread."[1] She read it just before the celebration of the Forty Hours, and a few days afterwards returned it to the Sister who had given it to her, saying, "I have something to thank you for. Your ' *There He is* ' has never been out of my head all the Forty Hours. I have never once entered the church without saying to myself, ' There He is, there He is ! ' " and as she spoke the tears were in her eyes. It became one of her favourite ejaculations ; and one day, long afterwards, when leaving the choir where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, she

[1] Si che tutta la Essentia Divina ricevete in quello dolcissimo Sagramento sotto quella bianchezza del pane ; si come il non si puó dividere, cosi non si divide tutto Dio, e tutto uomo in questa bianchezza dell' ostia.—(*Trattato della Oratione*, ch. 45.)

touched the same Religious on the arm, and indicating the altar by a quiet gesture, whispered to her, as if in confidence, " There He is ! "

It would doubtless be presumptuous in us to attempt to describe the nature of her own prayer—she used to say of herself that she could never put into words what passed between her soul and God—but one thing may safely be affirmed, namely, that it bore the same character of *simplicity* which stamped itself on all her acts. Speaking to one of her religious children of the difficulty she found in manifesting her interior, as required to do by a director, " I cannot understand or analyse myself," she said, " and I often tell our Lord, that if I could do for Him what He can do for me, *I would love Him with my whole heart, and be perfectly humble.*" Possibly the facility she found in directing her own heart to God prevented her from thoroughly estimating the obstacles which some find in this exercise, and their consequent need of systematic help. How completely prayer had become like second nature to her we gather from an admission which she lets fall in one of her written manifestations. " Aspirative prayer," she writes, " is to me almost as natural as to breathe, and God is ever soliciting me to closer union with Him." A religious, a convert to the faith, once speaking to her of the difficulty of acquiring Catholic habits, told her, amongst other things, how long a time it had taken her to acquire the *habit* of always raising the heart to God the first thing on waking in the morning. " What ! " said Mother Margaret in a tone of wonder, " don't Protestants do that ? *Why, child, what else could you have thought of?*" She had been gifted from a child with an extraordinary and abiding sense of the presence of God ; and one day, taking up a book that treated of prayer, and directed that we should begin by placing ourselves in the Divine presence, " What nonsense ! " she said ; " why, one is never out of His presence ! " The Sister to whom she spoke suggested that the

meaning of the writer was, we should realise it by making an act of the presence of God. "I don't understand all those *rigmaroles*," she replied; "if you are always in His presence, how can you put yourself into it more?" So continual was her sense of this Divine presence that even disturbance of mind had no power to dissipate it. "I must be a very wicked woman," she once said, "for I get into a passion, and go about scolding people, and yet I am never out of the presence of God for a single minute." In her written manifestations she frequently accuses herself of her sallies of irascibility, "committed in the presence of God."[1] It was as if she beheld that Divine eye, which her childish imagination had portrayed following her wherever she went, fixed on her without a moment's interruption. One was sometimes disposed to think that her prayer resolved itself into one great continuous act of that most Blessed Presence. A religious who knelt near her in choir has said, that one day she heard her softly murmuring to herself, during the time of meditation, the words, "O beautiful God!" and that the ejaculation and the tone in which it was uttered supplied her own heart with devout thoughts as she listened. She told another of her children that when before the Blessed Sacrament her prayer often was, "Lord, make them all saints!" Or again, "Lord deliver me from all human respect, double dealing, and servile fear." To one of the Oratorian fathers, to whom she was accustomed to speak without measuring her language, she said that she could not use many words in prayer, and that when praying before St. Philip's picture, she only said, "You dear old man, do something for me!"

Nor whilst speaking of the simplicity of her prayer, and of her instructions on that head, can we omit one little word

[1] Compare with these words Father Faber's well-known lines:—

"I never wander'd from Thee, Lord,
But sinn'd before Thy face;
Yet now, on looking back, my sins
Seem all beset with grace."

of hers on the subject of the Divine Office. A Sister having asked her to give her some instructions how to say it, Mother Margaret looked at her with some astonishment. " *How* are you to say it, child ? " she replied ; " why, say it as well as you can, to be sure." And when the Sister continued, " But what ought I to think of in saying it ? " she replied, " I know nothing about all that variety of ways : *I just stand up before God, and say it in His presence as well as I can.*"

This love of simplicity ran through everything. She could not bear those little subtleties of self-love which she was wont to denominate "faddles." It mattered not what turn the weakness took, whether it were love of notice, desire of sympathy, affectation of manner, or the fancifulness so common in the weaker sex, it met with little mercy at her hands. She did not even like the assumption of religious gravity, specially if she detected in it the least savour of conscious mannerism. She repeatedly and strongly denounced the habit which some have of keeping the eyes cast down, and looking out of the corners of them —thus affecting the appearance of seeing nothing, while they see as much as, or more than, their neighbours. She liked to see every one easy and natural after her own cast and character, and was no advocate for fashioning the exterior of an entire community on one model. A religious demeanour, indeed, she highly valued, but one which springs from the mortification of nature, not the dressing of it up. " I never like you less," she said to a young religious, " than when you are trying to be *extra good*." After writing a sharp reprimand to another on her want of exterior restraint, she thus concludes : " Now, I don't want you to change, but to perfect your nature, and to mortify what is wrong. If you were to try and change your face, you would look like a Methodist." Writing to one of her houses, she gives her religious the following instruction on the same subject : " If the interior be

absorbed in God, the whole exterior will show it. It is not in the downcast eye—for many who keep the eyes cast down see the most—but it is in keeping the eyes of the soul close shut to all but God that recollection consists." And again, " If you are recollected, your exterior will come right. The Fathers of the Church used to say, ' Know a man by his gait.' I am sure I could tell whether a person were recollected by their walk." As to her own exterior, no one could fail to be struck by its character of simple dignity. The writer confesses to having often stood and watched her pass along the cloister, for the sake of observing that grand, firm step which age and bodily infirmities could never change. It was more than queenly, for queenliness would convey the notion of studied art, and her every gesture was emphatically *natural ;* yet in what imperial court would such a bearing have appeared out of place ?

The idea of a religious life which she presented to her novices, was one in which love of the Cross held a prominent place. " The end for which you have entered religion," she writes to one doubtful of her vocation, " is to become quite a new creature, and to be entirely transformed into Christ crucified. The cross and humiliations of Jesus must be your only aim. You are elected to be the spouse of Christ crucified, to follow Him in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and poverty, nay, even to death ; for I hold out no other inducements to you but the cross of Christ, my beloved Spouse ; if His cross and His love will not content you, I have nothing else to offer." A life devoted to the active works of charity can hardly fail to be fruitful in occasions for exercising the virtues of mortification and love of the Cross ; nor did Mother Margaret ever try to disguise its rigours from those who aspired to receive the religious habit. She set before them in plain terms that their apostolate would lie in the school, the orphanage, and the hospital, and in the ungrudging discharge of every duty most repugnant to nature. But,

more than this, she retained so much of the antique spirit of Christianity as heartily to love the practice of exterior mortification, and to believe that without it the spirit of interior mortification is liable enough to expire. On this point she always acted in the guidance of others, with that prudence and discretion which so remarkably distinguished her, and which had early made Madame Caulier call her " a wise child " ; but both her instructions and her example were a continual protest against that false and effeminate spirituality which professes to sanctify the spirit without mortifying the flesh. She preferred those practices of penance which humble both, but discouraged such as afforded any lurking-place for self-love or ostentation. In particular she always showed a certain distrust of those who did not eat a sufficient quantity of food. Fervent as she was in keeping up the fasts and abstinences of the Church and of the Order, she made it a matter of obedience that all should eat enough, and that none should presume to practise any self-imposed penances by depriving themselves of the necessary quantity of nourishment. For she argued that, if they did not eat, they could not work, they could not teach, they could not sing the Divine praises, they could not keep the fasts ; and, moreover, her shrewd instinct satisfied her that indiscretion of this kind often enough proceeds from vanity and results in weakness of head. Specially did she urge on superiors the duty of eating a proper quantity in the refectory ; and she used to quote the words of an excellent and experienced superioress of another Order, the venerable Mother Mary Clare Knight, of the Benedictine Convent at Colwich, who, very early in her own religious life, had put her on her guard on this point, saying, " If you do not eat enough yourself, you will have a sickly Community, because younger Religious will be ashamed to take as much as they really require if they see their superiors pass the food untouched." Hence her novices were some-

times startled with her emphatic exhortation, " Whatever you do, child, eat well, and sleep well." When they came to know her better, they discovered how deep a love of the Cross existed under that frank and hearty exterior; so deep, and in her own regard, so difficult to satisfy, that her confessor has characterised it as " a *thirst* for penance " ; so fervid that as there is every reason to believe, her last excruciating illness was, if not caused, at least hastened by the increased austerities of her later years.

There was one branch of mortification which she often pressed on her Religious, and wherein her example was even more efficacious than her words. It was the courageous indifference to petty ailments, the cheerful endurance of weak health and bodily fatigue. She did not like them to show signs of pain by contractions of the face. With an earnestness, not sometimes without its touch of humour, she would seek to make them ashamed of the small self-indulgences to which feminine natures are so habitually inclined, and which she included under the comprehensive term of " faddiness." How truly heroic was her own life-long struggle with disease and suffering, few, perhaps, even of her own children, were fully aware. The remark was made by a priest during her last illness that Mother Margaret had taught her children how to work and how to pray, and that now she was teaching them how to die; he might have added that another of her lessons had been to teach them *how to suffer*. One anecdote on this head may suffice, in which this victory over nature rises to the sublime. A Sister feeling herself indisposed in the morning, went very early to our Mother's cell for the purpose of asking leave to absent herself from the morning office. Entering softly and unobserved, she found her standing erect, and engaged in washing the wounds, which at that time covered her whole person, praying aloud as she did so, for strength to get through the duties and fatigues of the day. Struck with awe at the

touching spectacle, and ashamed of her own pusillanimity, she withdrew without making her presence known, and went to choir with the rest.

She made little account of natural gifts, and seldom made weak health an obstacle to receiving subjects, provided she had reason to believe that they aspired to become saints. Her joy when she perceived any token of the right spirit, or any generous act of self-conquest, was often sensibly manifested. Once, after mentioning such an act performed by one of her Religious, she thus writes, in delighted thankfulness, " Such things as these, my dear father, give me more pleasure than I can express. They show that the soul is leaning to God. It is more to me than all the riches of the world to see my Sisters advance in sanctity." One of the prominent features in her system of spiritual training was her constant inculcation of solid piety in preference to anything of private or sentimental devotion. One scarce knows how to convey any notion of her teaching on this point, from the very fact of its energy and abundance. What she cared for was to get the root of *faith* firmly implanted in the soul, well knowing that once there, it would not fail to put forth the blossoms of devotion. The tendency to reverse the process, and to make piety consist in certain devout practices,—nay, even in the *mere* frequentation of the sacraments, was an abuse she found no words strong enough to condemn. It was what she called "shim-sham piety." In the same way she set little store by feelings. " Take no notice of feelings," she writes, " they always deceive us, and lead us wrong ; keep to the one principle—to seek God and to serve Him, in darkness or in light, and to have but one intention—God's will, and God's work." Hence young Religious, when experiencing any of those trials which are so common in the commencement of a spiritual life, generally found her direction to consist in a few plain words, tending to make their mighty troubles of very little importance. " Ah,

child ! " she would say, without looking up from her writing, " you'll have your ups and downs, of course " ; and then she would turn round on them with some such question as, " How do you write down ten thousand ? " One novice, in such a case, was a little mortified at being interrupted in the midst of the manifestation of her interior woes by Mother Margaret exclaiming, as she glanced out of the window, " Look at those fowls ; they'll have up every one of the garden seeds if you don't go and drive them out ! " And she had to leave the concerns of her soul in order to chase away the intruders. There is a passage in the works of St. John of the Cross which compares transitions of feeling, such as those we speak of, to the fermentation of new wine, and draws out the comparison at some length. Most of Mother Margaret's novices have probably been rendered familiar with that passage, and have been mortified at one time or another by seeing her hearty laugh as she made them sensible how closely their interior troubles resembled the working of yeast. The neophyte would come away from such an interview with a certain sense of disappointment, perhaps even a little perplexed ; but gradually her disappointment would result in the discovery, how large a share self-love possesses in these " ups and downs " ; and she would gain a first indistinct apprehension of the great spiritual truth, that the interior life is a way not of feeling but of faith. Even in cases of real desolation and aridity, Mother Margaret did not encourage the sufferers to talk of their feelings, and with a charitable severity she withheld from them the human consolation which nature at such times is apt to seek.

The tendency of her entire direction was to throw the soul on God, and to detach it from all beside, whether it were creatures, or that most dangerous form of the creature —*self*. Hence she disliked the habit of constant self-examination, believing that it cherished self-love, and kept the soul at a distance from God. " Cease all that self-

examination," she writes ; " it keeps you always more busy with yourself than with God. There are innumerable wants in the Church, many souls to convert, and many indifferent Catholics who want the last grace to bring them to their duties. Think of all these things, and leave yourself in the hands of God with a perfect spirit of abandonment. I should be weary of myself, and lose all courage, were I to occupy myself with myself. Keep the eye of your soul on our only good God. Be sure it is self-love and self-seeking that is occupying you now. There is too great an eagerness to have all things, self into the bargain, *quite right ;* and if self mingles with it, our Lord is sure to upset it for our greater good. There is but one perfect Being—God, and all His works. Let us be content with our own nothingness." Sometimes her direction on this head was couched in more epigrammatic language. " Always busy with self ! " she says. " If you could but forget there was such a nasty thing in the world ! I never think of praying for you in particular, because I feel sure you never forget yourself. I have to think of those who forget themselves."

Her skill in the treatment of scruples was universally known. She dealt with them summarily, and in most cases with singular success. Nothing disturbed her more than to see any of her children keep away, through scrupulous timidity, from Holy Communion. " The devil," she would say, " told Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and he tells her daughters *not* to eat of the Tree of Life." Her words in chapter on one such occasion have been preserved, and though only written down from memory, the fragment conveys a good idea of her ordinary style. " I can't understand how the spouses of our Lord can keep away from Him. I think it is one of the greatest marks of God's love to us to allow us to approach Him so frequently. And yet some of you keep away for some trifle, and refuse to let Him enter your heart when you are living under the

same roof. I really can't understand it. If we are in poverty or difficulty, it does not disturb me in the least; but when I hear that any of you have kept away from Holy Communion, it has given me such a pang that I have gone and lain down. You may not believe it, but it is true. I know I am nothing but filth and corruption; but what should I be without God? and what would you be without Him? If I could procure your sanctification by being cut into a thousand pieces to-morrow, I would gladly consent. I don't care in the least if you are blind, lame, or deaf; but I do care that you should be saints."

Sometimes she had to deal with difficulties of an opposite character, and then the firmness she showed in pulverising a scruple was equally displayed in the discreet guidance of the fervent. It often happened that those who in the world had been used to frequent, or even daily communion, found the regulations of the Novitiate on this head a painful restriction. This was a trial for which Mother Margaret had great compassion, but her compassion seldom led her to allow of a departure from the ordinary rule. Here are her words to a novice on the subject:—"Love is not alone proved by the frequency of our receiving our God in this Sacred Mystery. He there gives Himself to us that we may be able to practise solid virtue. We do nothing for Our Lord in receiving Him; He does all for us; and if we profit of the times that obedience permits, be assured we shall lose nothing of His gifts and graces. He beholds your desires, and is perhaps far more satisfied than when you communicated oftener, without thinking of combating any passion that might be deeply rooted in your soul. Many frequent the Sacraments, and yet are full of vanity and self-will—slaves to reputation, unable to bear that any person should point out their faults. Do you not think such persons would have pleased our Lord more if they had endeavoured to root out their faults, and to practise interior mortification?"

She could not bear that a Religious should betray inexactitude in any of the appointed ceremonies through a liking to indulge in private devotion. "It is not your own satisfaction you are to seek," she would say; "if it is a distraction to you to hold a candle, think you are our Lord's candlestick for the time." Nor could she endure that any private devotion should be preferred before the Liturgy and Office of the Church. She writes in great satisfaction at the conclusion of one Holy Week, "We have had the services correctly, and to the letter. All has been done as it should, not one thing for fancy." One might say that she thought better of a person's piety if they made the sign of the cross reverently and exactly, in the right time and manner, than if they performed a hundred devotions out of their own heads. Hence in the schools she insisted that all the necessary points of Christian doctrine, and the practices of obligation, should be taught in preference to what was simply pious and attractive, and any departure from this rule strongly roused her indignation.

Among the instruments of spiritualising a religious Community, to which she attached the highest importance, must certainly be numbered the possession of regular conventual buildings. In this she fully inherited the spirit of St. Dominic. In her new foundations, of course, she had to locate her Religious for a time in ordinary houses but always with the design of providing them with a proper convent, so soon as means would permit. And, in the meantime, she never failed to remind them, by repeated injunctions, to make up for the want of this exterior privilege by increased watchfulness over themselves. "As you are placed at present," she writes to the Superioress of a new foundation, "without a proper convent, and much exposed to seculars, you must put a double guard on all your words and acts, and make as much aspirative prayer as you can; this will be your shield of defence." Another time she writes, "You young

ones will have some day to come and make a long stay in the Mother House, to learn all the duties of Choir and Chapter, for without a proper place we cannot do the proper things, and the only wish I have to live is, that I may see the Rule and Constitutions kept to the letter." And again: "There will be no Sisters left at —— long together till we have a convent, or something more conventual. I must take care of the perfection of my Sisters, and not let them altogether lose sight of a religious life, which they soon would if they were left there any time without returning. If we keep our rule, we shall be made the instruments for the salvation of souls."

In her opinion, something of the religious spirit evaporated in a house which did not reflect that spirit in its exterior arrangements, and where many rules and ceremonies, in consequence, are apt to fall into abeyance. Hence her solicitude, at any sacrifice, to complete every office in the Mother House that it might serve as a model for the whole Congregation; and that Religious attached to younger foundations might return thither from time to time, to reinvigorate their religious spirit by a more exact practice of the Constitutions.

Of these Constitutions something must now be said. At the time to which we have brought down our narrative they were rapidly approaching completion. Their compilation was exclusively the work of one Religious, whose delicacy of health gave Mother Margaret reason to fear at one time that God was asking of her the sacrifice of a life most dear and precious. Happily these fears proved groundless, and the necessity of withdrawing her from the work of teaching enabled her to devote herself with less interruption to her laborious task. The contents of each chapter were first scrutinised by Mother Margaret, and then submitted to the approval of the Bishop of Birmingham before being incorporated in the work. They are exclusively drawn from the Constitutions of the Great Order. The only

portion derived from any other source is the chapter on Fasting and Abstinence, which is taken from the Rule of the Third Order, and prescribes four days' abstinence a week in lieu of the perpetual abstinence of the First and Second Orders ; the fasts observed, in addition to those of the Church, being only the whole season of Advent, all Fridays throughout the year, and a few Vigils. The Great Fast, observed by the First and Second Order from Holy-Cross to Easter, is not enjoined on the Sisters, and the office of Our Lady is (provisionally) substituted for the Divine Office, though, as has been observed, the daily recitation of the Divine Office has since been made obligatory in all houses of the Congregation. The Constitutions, formally approved by the Holy See in 1877, have been widely adopted by Congregations of Tertiaries not only in English-speaking lands, as California and the United States, but also in Chili and Prussia, a testimony to the discretion and wisdom of Mother Margaret and her indefatigable assistant, Mother Imelda.

It had been determined that the removal of the Novitiate to Stone should not take place until after the annual Retreat in July 1853, and that the same occasion should be selected for delivering the Constitutions to the assembled Religious before their separation. Great efforts were therefore made to get the book completed and out of the printer's hands by that time. In the meantime events occurred which gave a sorrowful character to the concluding months of Mother Margaret's residence at Clifton. Her dear friend, Mrs. De Bary, had long been in declining health, and in the month of April two of the Religious had gone to Weston Hall to nurse her through her last illness. She expired on the last day of that month, and the body being brought to Clifton, was interred in the lower cloister just at the foot of the great crucifix, near the entrance to the chapel. Exactly a month later, the same spot was chosen to receive the remains of another dear friend of the Com-

munity, and a Tertiary of the Dominican Order, Mrs. Spencer Northcote, who died on the 3rd of June, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, after being for six weeks constantly attended day and night by two of the Religious. Thus the two Tertiaries of the two sister Orders reposed together side by side within the precincts of the convent.

The Retreat opened on the 7th of July, and was given by the Rev. Father Augustine Malthus, O.P. The Constitutions did not arrive until after its close, and by a somewhat singular coincidence, on the 22nd of July, the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, one of the chief patronesses of the Dominican Order. After Vespers, the Religious being all assembled in choir, his Lordship the Bishop of Birmingham delivered them a beautiful and touching address. He recalled their early beginnings, when they were destitute of all human means, and without even a house of their own. He traced the Providence that had led them on step by step to the present moment, and the countless tokens of God's favour and protection which had thus far been showered over their path. And he reminded them that among these blessings they had not been left without a root in heaven, and that in the nine years that had elapsed since their foundation they had given four of their number to stand, it may be, as their intercessors before God. The book of the Constitutions was then delivered to each one of the professed, and the following day the dispersion of the Sisters began ; a somewhat sorrowful time for those who were left to form the Clifton Community, and who were often enough reminded of the words of our Holy Father, that " the grain is meant to be scattered, and not to be hoarded up." Henceforth she who was so pre-eminently the life and soul of her Community would visit them only at passing intervals ; her home would be there no more ; and if any stern critics should be found to say that such regrets were but human after all, let them remember the touching words of Blessed

ST. DOMINIC'S PRIORY, STONE

1. V. Dominic's Chapel in the grounds
2. Church
3. North view of Priory
4. South front

Jordan, who, when writing of the departure of St. Dominic from Bologna, describes how the brethren " wept to be so soon taken from their mother's breast."

Mother Margaret and three professed religious went first, to prepare for the reception of the novices, who followed with their novice-mistress a few days later, under the escort of the Rev. F. Neve. Only a small portion of the convent and cloister were yet built : a large piece of ground was staked off where the church was intended to stand, and where the builders were already making their preparations. The Sunday Mass was still being said in St. Anne's Chapel, and on the space now occupied by the choir, sanctuary, and priest's house, stood a small house, and a row of cottages, of which the house and two of the cottages alone were as yet in the possession of the Community. The house served as guest-house, priest's-house, and kitchen, and was connected with the cloister by a wooden covered passage of the roughest construction, immortalised under the title of *St. Theresa's Alley*. Marvellous were the uses to which the little house was in turns converted, and its fame extended widely among Mother Margaret's guests ; it provided so many excellent opportunities for the trial of patience as to acquire the well-earned name of " Job's," by which appellation it became familiarly known far beyond the little town of Stone. A hedge and paling ran close under the present refectory windows, dividing the garden of the Community from the garden ground that lay beyond ; and by the side of the hedge was a footpath leading to a tavern which rejoiced in the sign of the Hand and Trumpet, neither tavern nor footpath contributing much to the quiet or comfort of the religious. As to the convent, it was, of course, very incomplete. The first step, so soon as the workmen were out of the house, was to convert the present Community-room into a temporary choir, whilst the only completed wing of the cloister was assigned to the use of the congre-

gation, and sufficed at that time for their numbers. There were plenty of inconveniences and make-shifts, but these only afforded matter for amusement and merriment; and whatever might have been the anxieties of the elders, to the light-hearted novices it was a happy time. A letter accidentally preserved from Mother Francis Raphael has recently brought to mind some of the incidents of those poetic days, when there was no gas and very little crockery, when the novitiate was in the hands of the workmen, and the novices attended their daily instructions under the trees in the garden; when studies were pursued with tolerable success on an old box in one of the lavatories, and when every room in turn was tried as a refectory. And every room above ground having proved a failure, the Community had at last to retreat to certain apartments in the basement storey, playfully denominated the *dungeons*. Poetic days indeed, when even the wild robins gave their welcome to the white-robed children of St. Dominic, as the birds of Alvernia came forth in old time to greet St. Francis and his companions. For it is a fact, and no legendary romance, that though the convent garden was only divided by a wall from the public road, and was at that time very far from being a mountain solitude, yet the birds who inhabited it showed themselves so tame and so confident in the protection of their new friends, that they would perch on the heads of the Religious as they sat under the trees, and would eat crumbs of bread out of their hands. And the alliance between the robins and the nuns has remained to this day unbroken, so that few winters pass without some of these birds claiming hospitality within the cloister.

During the few days which elapsed before the temporary choir could be got ready for the use of the Religious, the Office had to be recited in private; but the want of the choral Office was felt as such a deprivation that at length they assembled for Vespers under the tall trees in the garden. And truly delightful it was, once more to receive

the aspersion of Holy Water, and to join in the chanting of the *Salve*, its melody blending with the notes of their feathered friends overhead !

Such were the commencements of St. Dominic's Convent, which often recalled to mind a favourite maxim of Bishop Ullathorne's, that " nothing was of any worth which was not begun in a garret, or a cellar." And this maxim was not unfrequently quoted, in merry mood, by those who had to seek their dinner in the " dungeons," or to assist in carrying the said dinner from the kitchen, through the difficulties of St. Theresa's alley, and a half-finished cloister, where the workmen were still in possession.

On the 4th of August, the Feast of our Holy Father St. Dominic, the first stone of the church was laid with due solemnity. The first Mass celebrated within the convent walls was the Pontifical High Mass, sung on this day by his Lordship the Bishop of Birmingham. The Rev. F. Trenow was appointed chaplain to the convent and missionary priest ; and from this day the Chapel of St. Anne's ceased to be used by the congregation, and was exclusively given up to the purposes of a poor school. The congregation was at this time but small ; Stone had hitherto been attached to the mission of Aston, and when first of all there was talk of erecting it into a separate mission, there was a joke in the diocese about sending a priest to take care of " two old women." But, in point of fact, the Catholics at that time numbered sufficient to fill St. Anne's Chapel on Sundays, and the day school had already a fair attendance of children. A solid foundation had been laid by the Passionist Fathers, and Father Dominic's name was still in every mouth. To this day that name is held in veneration, and the changes of later years have not obliterated the memory of those famous Corpus Christi processions at Aston, in which all the faithful of the neighbourhood delighted in

taking part. Still, the Catholics of Stone were but a little flock, and some persons who saw the dimensions of the proposed church, questioned the prudence of erecting a building of such proportions for so humble a congregation. It soon, however, began to multiply. "I was almost happy this evening," writes Mother Margaret, "seeing so many poor Irishmen, with their heels out of their stockings, praying at the other end of the cloister." When Easter came the communicants numbered eighty, an increase which was thought extraordinary at the time; but the progress of the congregation, however consoling, brought with it some inconveniences. On week-days the Community had their choir to themselves, and a most devotional choir it was; but when Sunday came, there was an end to cloistered retirement. The congregation gradually overflowed the narrow limits assigned to its use; and the women and children had to be accommodated within the stalls of the Religious, and in every available quarter. Those who are only familiar with the stately aspect of the present church would smile could the scene be conjured back which was presented in the temporary choir of 1853. It has been depicted in some rough sketches still preserved, which represent a state of things quite in conformity with the notable maxim of beginning all things in the "cellar." But we must hear Mother Margaret describe the same scene, in which she overlooked the inconveniences, and beheld only the germ of a great and growing work to God's glory. "I suffer much," she writes, "both in mind and body, but our Lord has given me a little encouragement by the mass of people who come here on Sundays. It was a mass of heads to-day; rooms full, cloister full, stair up and down, even the choir with women in it. All I can say is, *souls*, *souls*; for when I go out and see the loss of what is most precious, I get both headache and heartache."

On Rosary Sunday, 1853, the Confraternity of the

Holy Rosary was formally erected at Stone. The modest list of names that day enrolled on the books has since swelled to a thousand, and the congregation at this moment is estimated at about twelve hundred souls.[1] Even before the close of the first winter there appeared so fair a promise for the future as to rejoice the dying moments of one good Catholic, who gave thanks that she had lived to see such happy days for Stone. This was Mrs. James Beech, who expired on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1853, and was buried in a vault within the unfinished church. That feast was likewise memorable as the day on which took place the first professions in the new Novitiate House; the ceremony being performed in the room then used as the choir.

Mother Margaret continued in a weak and precarious state of health throughout this winter, which was unusually severe. Her sufferings were augmented by loss of sleep; but in the month of January 1854, this symptom was relieved in a remarkable manner. She had brought with her from Belgium, among other relics, a silk band, which had formerly been wrapt round the relics of St. Margaret the Martyr. One night she dreamt that one of the Saints of the Order appeared to her, and said, "Why do you not invoke your patron Saint? Place round your head the band of St. Margaret." The following day she wore the band, as directed, and slept that night as she had not done for several years. She awoke entirely relieved from the feeling in the head, which gave reason to apprehend a softening of the brain; and after this time she continued to improve, though anxiety and over-exertion easily brought on a relapse. It may be added, that in later years this tendency to sleeplessness was almost entirely removed; and the favourable change was attributed, both by Mother Margaret and her children, to the intercession of the Saint, whom they invoked every evening in all the houses of the Congregation for this express intention.

[1] 1869.

One trouble at this time was the state of the Community at Longton. The house was so dilapidated as to be hardly habitable ; pools of water stood on the floors, and, owing to the excessive damp of the chapel, it became at length impossible to reserve the Blessed Sacrament. As no other house could be procured in the place, and as the owners refused either to sell or to repair the Foley, it became necessary to withdraw the Religious, with the understanding that the legacy left by the Rev. Mr. Hulme should be devoted as soon as possible to another foundation in the Potteries.[1] On the 29th of January it was publicly given out at the Sunday Mass that the Community were about to leave, and that after the next day Mass would be said in that chapel no more. The people were much distressed ; some, even of the men, sobbed aloud ; " Now the Sisters are going away," they said, " there will be nobody *to blow us up*." Most of the Religious were transferred to Stone, but two remained in the house till the first week in February to superintend the removal of furniture, and whilst there, were fast snowed into their dreary residence, so as to be unable to open their doors until a passage was cut through the snow with no little trouble. The abandonment of this foundation, where the Sisters had been labouring for two years, not without many discouragements indeed, yet with a full share of consolation, was a step taken with regret ; it was productive, however, of one benefit, by enabling Mother Margaret to strengthen the Community at Stone, which had at first included but a small number of professed Sisters.

The nave of the church was now fast approaching completion, and the 3rd of May 1854, the Feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross, was fixed on as the day of open-

[1] It will be borne in mind that Stone, though in the near vicinity of the Potteries, does not form a part of that district, and that the money left by Mr. Hulme could not therefore be applied to this foundation.

ing. The nave alone was built at this time, a kind of temporary sanctuary being arranged in front of the chancel arch, which was closed in with masonry. One of the aisles was boarded and curtained off from the rest of the church to serve provisionally as a choir for the Religious, and this choir they continued to occupy for the space of nine years. Although the public opening did not take place until the day named above, the Religious contrived to take possession of their church in a more private manner on the 30th of April, the Feast of St. Catherine of Siena, when they chanted Vespers in their aisle, after which the *Veni Creator* was sung to invoke the blessing of God on all the devotions hereafter to be offered within those walls.

The opening of the church took place with all the solemnity possible ; and the presence of the Fathers from Hinckley, who had been invited with eleven of their young postulants, all wearing the habit of the Order, gave the ceremony a truly Dominican aspect. Many of them would doubtless long remember their accommodation in the garden school-house, transformed for the occasion into a religious dormitory, and the other incidents of their visit to Stone.

The two side chapels in the church, severally dedicated to the Holy Rosary, and to St. Winifred, were now nearly complete. The beautiful carved stone altar in the former chapel had been presented by the Baroness Stafford ; and here the first Mass said within the church was celebrated very early by the Rev. F. Neve. The Pontifical High Mass was sung by the Bishop of Birmingham, the sermon being preached by the Very Rev. Dr. Newman, who came over from Dublin for the occasion, and who recalled to the minds of his hearers the old Catholic associations of the place, dwelling on the fact, so rare in the history of holy places, of the seeds of faith springing up a second time and bearing blossom on the soil where they had once been trampled out. After the conclusion of the ceremony the

Community assembled to receive the congratulations of his Lordship, who was pleased to express the singular happiness he felt in witnessing the beginning of this new work. He recalled the old days at Coventry, and his words emboldened Mother Margaret to make a request. She was very desirous that the evening service should include a procession of Our Lady; of that very image of Our Lady which had been the joy of her heart at Coventry, and which she had brought with her from Clifton to Stone, carrying it all the way in her arms; but she did not feel quite sure how far his Lordship would agree to the proposal. At last, however, she ventured to make it with a mixture of simplicity and timidity that was all her own. "My Lord," she said, "don't you think Our Lady would like to take a walk round the church?" Not only did she obtain the permission she desired, but the Bishop consoled her heart by following the holy image in full pontificals, and himself singing the usual prayers. The architect who was present, Mr. Hansom, recognised the image which he had seen carried nine years before at Coventry; and in those nine years how marvellous a work had been accomplished!

It may be proper in this place to give a short summary of the after-progress of the convent, for the buildings which now stand upon the ground were only raised by degrees. A portion of the west wing, including the refectory and new novitiate, was opened in April 1855; the kitchen, with the cells over it, being added in the winter of 1856, when further progress became impossible, until possession could be obtained of the row of cottages which occupied the site of the present chapter-room and guest-house. As the owner refused to part with them, the only resource was prayer; and innumerable were the Rosaries and Novenas offered for this intention. In fact, "Mother Margaret's cottages" became rather famous, and were not only perseveringly prayed for by her own Communities, but were more than

once recommended to the prayers of the Confraternity of the Precious Blood attached to the London Oratory. Whilst further progress was suspended at Stone, however, fresh works were being elsewhere undertaken. The acceptance of Mr. Hulme's legacy, now reduced in various ways to the sum of £1,600, rendered the foundation of a convent somewhere in the Potteries a matter of obligation. Stoke-upon-Trent, a town about six miles from Stone, was selected for the purpose; and in 1856 were begun the nave of the Church of Our Lady of the Angels, the priests' house and schools, and a very small portion of the adjoining convent. A grant was obtained from the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, and another from the Poor School Committee, towards the erection of the schools, which were built in 1858; but the remaining expenses had to be defrayed by the Community, assisted by that ever generous benefactor, Dr. Northcote, who may be said to have placed his entire purse at their disposal; and whose self-sacrificing devotion to the interests of the Congregation, spread over a period of twenty years, could never be acknowledged or repaid. The Convent of Stoke was taken possession of by a small Community in September 1857; and many were the hardships which for years fell to their lot. They slept in a common dormitory; and their Community-room served by day the purposes of a middle school. For a choir, indeed, they were well provided in a gallery constructed for the purpose; but their temporary refectory and kitchen had to be approached through a wooden communication which was not impervious to wet. Stoke was for nine years the post of honour of the Congregation: it presented the Religious with plenty of work, and little or no comfort; but the work has been so blessed, the people have shown themselves so responsive to every call, and so sensible of every sacrifice made on their behalf, that those who have laboured there have ever given it a warm place in their affections. It was not until the year 1866 that the addition of another wing to the

convent supplied the religious with necessary accommodation, enabling their numbers to be increased, and the convent to be erected into a Priory.

In the meantime further progress was being made at Stone. In the August of the year 1857 the property before spoken of was purchased, though at an exorbitant price ; and the cottages were, for a time, adapted to the purposes partly of a middle pension school, and partly of a hospital. The latter charity, the establishment of which had lain so close to Mother Margaret's heart, from the first period of her return to England, may be said to have first fairly begun in 1856, when the sum of £2,000 was left to the Community, by a benefactor, Mr. Wheble, who wished to be unknown, for the purpose of commencing the hospital. It was judged most prudent, and in accordance with the wishes of the donor, to appropriate this money to the support of hospital patients, rather than to the erection of a building, or the purchase of land ; and in March 1856, a house was therefore hired in the town, whither were transferred one or two infirm women, who had hitherto been maintained at Clifton, other patients being also received, whose numbers gradually increased. In the June of the same year Mother Margaret paid a visit to Belgium, mainly for the purpose of inspecting the hospitals and other charitable institutions of that country, with the view of gaining information that might be useful to her own future foundation. The hospital at Tirlemont, under the care of the Austin Nuns, pleased her much ; and from it she gathered many valuable hints. " Our Mother was very kindly welcomed by her Belgian friends of all classes," writes the religious who accompanied her on this visit ; " the poor fish-women almost mobbed her in the market-place at Bruges." M. Versavel and the good Colette were among those who offered her their cordial greetings. The fame of " Margarita," in short, was found to be in no degree diminished.

After possession had been obtained of the cottages in

August 1857, the hired house was given up, and the hospital patients were removed into them; but the accommodation thus provided being quite insufficient for their increasing requirements, it became essential to provide them another home. The tavern adjoining the convent garden seemed precisely what was wanted, but the obstacles that stood in the way of its purchase were even greater than in the former case. The Community may be said to have compassed this property with their prayers and processions, as in old time the people of Israel went about the walls of Jericho. Again and again were the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary recited processionally during fifteen successive days; and at last, in the summer of 1860, the property was put up for sale. The particulars regarding this purchase merit to be recorded. The grave inconveniences arising from the want of a proper choir had long been felt by the Community, and many had agreed to unite in prayer that the obstacles in the way of its erection might be removed, so that they might be able to give the choir to Mother Margaret as a present on her half-Jubilee. By this was understood the 25th Anniversary of her profession as a Dominican Tertiary, which fell on the 30th of April 1860. It had been agreed, however, to defer the celebration of the anniversary until St. Margaret's day, July 20th, on which day it was always customary to keep Mother Margaret's feast, and to give her, what she dearly loved, a "show" of work, drawings, or other presents. But when St. Margaret's day arrived, it found the Community far too sad for any festal rejoicings. They were mourning the loss of one of their number, whose memory among them will ever be had in benediction,—Sister Mary Philomena Berkeley, who died of consumption on the 16th of July, leaving a blank among her Sisters not easily filled. It was agreed, therefore, once more to transfer the half-Jubilee to another day. But St. Margaret's feast was

not destined to pass without one notable event. The practical difficulty in the way of building the choir was the fact that the ground was occupied by the cottage hospital, for whose inmates some other home must be provided ere their old one could be levelled with the dust. The acquisition of the tavern was therefore a necessary preliminary to the commencement of the choir, and on the 20th of July the Hand and Trumpet was gained. The unexpected death of the proprietor caused it to be put up for auction, and, to the surprise of all concerned, the Community became the purchasers for the sum of £1,500. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a very grave question how this sum could have been procured. For, if it must be owned, Mother Margaret was a great spendthrift for God ; her resources were generally expended as soon as acquired, and she regarded the notion of laying up money with a sort of horror, warning her Religious that when once they began to follow that system the blessing of God would cease to rest upon their work. In this case, however, the precise sum of £1,500 had recently come into the possession of the Community, and that in a totally unexpected manner. It was not bequeathed by any benefactor, but was property belonging to a member of the Community, Sister Mary Camillus Rushworth, though she had long given up any hopes of recovering it, and had been received as a novice with the understanding that such was the case. Just before her profession, however, which took place about this time, the affairs connected with her property were brought to a most unlooked-for termination, and without any litigation or vexatious dispute, the Community found themselves possessed of the exact sum which enabled them to complete their long-desired purchase. If any pious client of Our Lady of the Rosary be disposed to attribute this result to her intercession, and to associate the two sums of £1,500 with those fifteen mysteries which had so often been said and sung around the boundaries of

the land, we certainly will not dispute their conclusions. Such coincidences, in days of simpler faith, have, ere now, fed the grateful devotion of many a pious heart ; and they have been too numerous in the history of our own Congregation for us, at least, to be indifferent to their significance. It was ever the happiness of Mother Margaret and of her children to own that all they had, they received through the hands of Mary : and if the grounds on which they rested such a belief seem to the eyes of the world but puerile, it is a puerility of which they have no desire to be cured. But we cannot conclude our narrative of this transaction without relating Mother Margaret's exclamation when she heard of the unexpected result of the auction. Her heart was just then full of her lost child, so recently departed, and so especially dear to her, and whom, on the day before her death, she had specially charged to pray for this very intention ; " Oh, my blessed child ! " she exclaimed ; and she never failed to attribute to her intercession the happy conclusion of this important business.

The hospital patients were at once transferred into their new quarters, and, at the same time, the commencements were laid of a new charity which arose out of the following circumstances :—News was one day brought to Mother Margaret that a poor Irishman had died in Stone, leaving five little boys quite unprovided for, the eldest being twelve years old, the youngest an infant. The mother was sick in the Stafford Infirmary, and not expected to recover. All five children were about to be sent to the workhouse, but Mother Margaret could not bear the thought of this, and though a little perplexed at the fact of their being boys, she resolved to take them all. Her first idea was to hire a house in the town for them, but as nobody was willing to let one for the purpose, the convent premises were examined, and a very small building discovered on the recently acquired property, the lower room of which had been turned into a stable. The horse was at once

dispossessed, and located in the coal-cellar, the room cleared and cleaned, and the five little boys established there under the care of a woman from the hospital. Their mother being sufficiently recovered to leave the infirmary, afterwards joined them and this was the beginning of St. Vincent's Orphanage, which later numbered forty inmates, and occupied an entire row of cottages opposite to the convent.

Whilst these undertakings were still in hand, Mother Margaret was at the same time engaged in establishing other more distant foundations, of which we shall speak hereafter, and in dispensing charities on her own munificent scale. No wonder that strangers who beheld such things drew the comclusion that Mother Margaret must possess some boundless fund of wealth, and that they felt incredulous when assured that the only wealth of the Community was obtained by prayer. Or that others, in simpler faith, interpreted such assurances in a literal sense, and spread abroad the tale how, when in want of money, Mother Margaret was accustomed to pray before her favourite image of Our Lady, and received what she asked for from Our Lady's own hands. For here, as in other cases, the legendary story did but embody a certain truth. Her own words were sometimes repeated, and made to bear a marvellous character, as when she said, as she often did, that if the money and the food did not multiply, the Community could never get on ; or that her bank was in Heaven. Once, when in serious straits, she was consulting with Bishop Ullathorne as to the possibility of borrowing money for some of her undertakings, and his Lordship was endeavouring to make her understand the undesirableness of borrowing at that precise moment when there was a panic in the money market, and when the rate of accommodation was so high. " All that is above my ability," she replied ; " I get my accommodation from God Almighty." Another time, a religious superior was explaining to her

his own views and plans, and how he invested the money of his Community so as to bring in the largest income ; "And I," said Mother Margaret, "invest ours in little boys and girls," meaning her orphans. It must distinctly be understood, however, that the only *marvels* which characterised these proceedings were altogether of another order from that to which the tongue of rumour sometimes gave currency. "There is nothing like prayer," was one of Mother Margaret's favourite sayings, and her life was its justification. One narrative of an answer to prayer has been already given ; we will here add another, taken down at the time from her own lips. It must be premised that in the year 1865 the Community had agreed to purchase a piece of ground on the other side of the road, which they then trusted would serve as a site for their Hospital and Boys' Orphanage. They were, however, utterly without the necessary means, and, as usual, Our Lady of the Rosary had been incessantly invoked, and the Fifteen Mysteries recited again and again. The result shall be told in Mother Margaret's own words :—

"I had a letter from a lady who was an annual subscriber to our Hospital, saying that she was coming to the convent for an hour or two, and wished for a private interview. I had an early dinner, and when she came I felt very frightened to go to her. She began to talk, and almost the first thing she said was that she meant to withdraw the sum she had annually given to the Hospital. My heart began to sink ; but after a little more talk she said, 'I am thinking of giving you, instead, £1,000 at once.' I could not tell you what I felt. I began to cry. She said, 'Will you accept it ?' I said, 'I can only tell you that at this very time we have £1,500 to pay for the ground we have purchased, and, except to God, we did not know where to turn for the money.' But that was not all. As if to show clearly that it was the Fifteen Rosaries, she said that she wished us to undertake a certain charity for

her, which no one was to know, and that she would give £500 additional for that purpose, which she would send on the Feast of St. Theresa, making in all £1,500. She said, 'How do you get the means for all you undertake?' I answered, 'You ask me how we get it, and don't you see how God has sent you here just at this moment to give us the very sum we want?' She went away; and Mother Sub-prioress came, anxious to know the result of her visit. I said, 'I should like Sister Rose and Sister Agnes to come too.' Then I told them all; and we all sat and cried together. And, as if to finish it, instead of waiting till the Feast of St. Theresa, she sent the money on *the Eve of Rosary Sunday*.

CHAPTER IX

WE have hitherto been engaged in tracing the exterior features of Mother Margaret's life, and the providential guidance by which she, whom we have seen in 1814 a friendless and destitute orphan, was led, step by step, to become the foundress in England of the Conventual Third Order of St. Dominic. And having reached this stage in her history, it may be well for a while to suspend our narrative, and introduce the reader to a closer acquaintance with Mother Margaret herself, as she was known to her religious children and her more familiar friends. The most casual intercourse with her sufficed in some degree to make her known, and strangers seldom left her after a single interview without retaining a certain impression of her singular force of soul. Indeed, the most prominent features in her character could hardly, even at a first meeting, entirely escape detection—the firm will, the clear and rapid judgment, the boundless power of sympathy, which won her the title of "everybody's mother," and the ever-present thought of God. Something of all this betrayed itself to the most casual observer; and he would have had but dull discernment, who, after listening to the mere tones of her voice, could have pronounced her an ordinary person.

Even apart from the gifts of grace, she had many of those natural qualities which infallibly raise the souls that are endowed with them above their fellows. She possessed in a remarkable degree that magnificent physical organisation

which so often accompanies great moral force ; and the life-long bodily infirmities from which she suffered, while they tamed and chastened her strong nature, never impaired its vigour. It was one of those cases in which the physical constitution allies itself to the moral one, and with unshrinking firmness sustains the energy of the will. The strength of such a soul, supported by such an organisation, might easily, in the mere natural order, have assumed a formidable shape : one can imagine its producing a royal heroine of the antique age, a Dido or a Semiramis, whose force and capacity would have been employed in founding a city or ruling a world. Most persons who knew Mother Margaret have been struck by this *royal* element in her character. "Her powers of government," writes Mother Imelda, who accompanied her on many important occasions, "were certainly far greater than the sphere in which they were exercised. When travelling with her, it was extraordinary to see how quick her eye was for the improvement of the towns she passed through. She wondered at the want of public spirit in not erecting such or such buildings. At Rhyl, particularly, I remember her saying how the town ought to have been laid out—a pier built here, a terrace there, and so on."

This *strength* of soul, which at once made itself felt, led some superficial observers to call Mother Margaret's a *masculine* character ; but this was a singularly erroneous judgment. Her force, whether of soul or body, was undoubtedly colossal ; but it was but a woman's force after all, and flowed from that power which, if it were nothing but *will* in an Assyrian empress, in the Christian religious deserved better to be denominated *heart*. *Masculine* vigour would have compelled the impulses of the will to have passed through the cooler medium of reason ; it would have been less impetuous, but more inflexible—calmer in its onset, and possibly more consistent in its action ; but where would have been the grace of *tender-*

ness? Those who really knew Mother Margaret were well aware that her strength was far more from the heart than the head,—that even her intellectual gifts, her quick perception, and rapid judgment, were all essentially feminine: the manly powers of deduction and reasoning were wanting. "She was," writes Father Dalgairns, "the veriest woman I ever knew."

But the natural force of character of which we have spoken was blended in her with another kind of power, the source of which was not in herself. She might have said, with the Psalmist, that God was the strength of her life. It would be hopeless to offer an idea, not merely of her interior life, but of any aspect of her character, without giving the first place to her *sense of God*. All the world knew something of her devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and could tell a hundred stories on the subject, which might seem to represent it in an extraordinary light; but those who shared her daily intercourse knew perfectly well that that devotion was wholly eclipsed and swallowed up in her devotion to God. As one friend well expressed it, "She was *full* of God." It inspired one with a kindred devotion only to hear her pronounce, in her rich, full tones, the words, "Almighty God." God was the very atmosphere of her life, an atmosphere she made sensible to all who approached her. God's glory, His interests, His side in every question, was what she first considered, and His holy Name was ever on her lips. "How good God is!" was her exclamation all day long. Everything that occurred was so simply and immediately referred to God, that her companions could not but live, as she did, in His continual presence. If it rained, she would say, "How good God is to send the rain!" if it was fine, "How good God is to send the sunshine!" If she had anything to give away, "How good God is to give us the pleasure of giving!" Or if she had completed any great undertaking for the glory of God, her thanksgiving was more in detail.

" How good God is," she would say ; " first He gives you the desire to do something for His glory, then He gives the means, and after all He rewards you for doing it, as if it had not been His own work from first to last ! " How greatly she longed to be with God, and how often such longings broke forth into words ! " Lent is past," she writes, " and so flies all time till we are in our true home in the bosom of God. Oh, happy, blessed thought ! To be with God for ever and ever ! To be with Him who is our life, our light, our love ! The cross soon passes, and the glorious resurrection comes." She had a special devotion to that line in the Hymn for the Ascension, *Tu esto nostrum gaudium*, and not long before her death bade one of her religious translate the verse, and write it out, that she might keep it always in her prayer-book. Any words in the Divine Office which spoke of God as our joy or our hope, or which referred to our union with Him, went straight to her heart. She once severely reproved Sister Francis Raphael who expressed a wish to die. " It is an idle wish," she said ; " a religious should desire to live and work for God." The Sister, who knew the way to touch her, repeated the line *Jube me venire ad te*. " Ah, there you have caught me," replied Mother Margaret : " if He would but say, *Come !* " On her death-bed she could not refrain from sometimes expressing a regret that the last hour was so long delayed—" not," as she once said to her medical attendant, " on account of my sufferings, if they were ten times worse : it's to see Almighty God, that is what I long for." If she heard of any act of dishonour to God it touched her to the quick. After hearing the narrative of a shocking act of sacrilege and blasphemy against the Holy Trinity, committed some years ago in one of our military colleges, she caused the Athanasian Creed to be recited in English every Sunday after Mass, as an act of reparation, and this was continued for many years, until the Divine Office began to be daily recited, in which the

form *Quicunque* generally occurred in the Sunday Office. Her distress when she heard of any fact bearing on the spread of infidelity in England was not a common sorrow —it pierced her very soul. A religious travelling with her alone, happened to relate some facts of painful interest that had lately come to her knowledge. The particular form of infidelity of which she had occasion to speak was that known as *Positivism*, the supporters of which are understood to set forth *Humanity* as the only God. It was not very easy to bring home to Mother Margaret's apprehension the fact that any men existed out of a lunatic asylum who believed in nothing more divine than their own corrupt nature ; but when she at length grasped the idea her horror was intense. She cast her eyes towards heaven, and remained silent for a moment ; then turning to her companion, she uttered one of those strong words which, in her strong tones, were never to be forgotten—" *He'd be but a rotten sort of God, my dear !* "

This continual sense of God, in which faith and love had an equal share, explains the ardour she always manifested in all that regarded His worship, and the profuse munificence with which she adorned His sanctuary. She would have lavished the wealth of an empire, had she possessed it, in the decoration of His temple and tabernacle. " When our Mother had to provide anything for the church," said one of her earliest companions, " it was as if she was ordering for some prince of boundless riches,*to whom all the bills would be sent in.*" This was undoubtedly her favourite devotion ; it far exceeded even her benevolence to the poor. She always impressed on her Religious that care for the service of God must come before charity to the poor, or the supply of their own necessities. " It would be better that we should want bread," she would say, " than that our Lord should be neglected ; as to the poor, there are many to help them, but few people think of our hidden God." Her last charge to the Religious who succeeded her in the

government of the Congregation was, " Never forget the Church of God ; let that always come first." Hence it was that, as we have already said, she was so ready to answer appeals for help from poor missions, and that she gave away vestments, copes, albs, and altar linen so liberally, that the value of her gifts, if reckoned, would have amounted to many hundreds. Nothing moved her so much as the least semblance of meanness or stinginess in what appertained to God's service ; whatever was given to Him was to be the best that could be given. When she first heard of the gold discoveries in Australia, her thought immediately was, " Perhaps we shall be able to give our Lord gold candlesticks ! " and after expending her utmost efforts in the decoration of the altar before some great feast, she was never satisfied : " It is all so poor, so mean," she would say, " to give to our good God ! " After the consecration of St. Dominic's Church at Stone, someone was admiring its beauty, but she replied in an indifferent tone, " It does not satisfy me ; I see much more of its imperfections than its beauties. Nothing will ever satisfy me but the God of the church. The church is all very well, but I want to see its Master." When the high altar of this church was being put up, though she was then far from well, she went to watch the workmen, and see that everything was done properly. The brick foundation for the altar having been put up in a rough coarse way, she sent for the head workman, and desired that the masonry should be carefully finished, plastered, and whitewashed. The man looked a little surprised, and said he would see about it. " But it must be *done*, sir," she said, in a positive tone ; " you will make it all as good inside as out, and better, if anything. I'll have no rubbish inside God's altar." She looked disgusted and disappointed when she found that the marble portions, instead of being formed of solid blocks, were only stone covered with thin slabs of a more costly material, and went away saying, half

aloud, " I suppose one can't help it, but I wish it had been solid ! "

The intense faith with which she realised our Divine Lord present on the altar, led her always to use the words " our Lord " in speaking of the Blessed Sacrament. It was a form of expression which could hardly be adopted with the same propriety by another ; but however familiar, it was on her lips always reverent, and flowed from the simplicity of her faith, as it also deepened the faith of many who heard her use it. Thus, speaking to a lady, then a Protestant, of the Religious visiting the poor, she said, " It is a difficult thing sometimes to get our Sisters to go out of the convent ; they none of them like *to leave our Lord*." The words sank into her hearer's heart, and brought home a sense of the Real Presence which was new to her, and soon afterwards she became a Catholic. " When she had received any good news or unexpected pecuniary assistance," says one of her Religious, " I often met her returning in haste from the choir, and she would say, " I have just been to say ' Thank you' to our Lord." Nothing displeased her more than any remissness or negligence in necessary preparations relating to the Blessed Sacrament, nor was it any excuse in her eyes if the omission proceeded from being absorbed in prayer, whether at Meditation or Mass. That was not her idea of recollection, which she would say did not consist in being absorbed in self, but should always leave the soul vigilant for every duty. On one occasion, when she had observed some hurry and confusion among those engaged in preparing the altar, she administered a severe reproof. " Our Mother cried, and so did we," writes one of those who relates this incident. " I do not remember her words, but she reminded us of the deference that was shown in every movement before an earthly sovereign, and contrasted it with the way in which we had been moving before the throne of the King of kings."

Another time, when there had been but a poor attend-

ance at one of the Processions of the Blessed Sacrament, the indifference of the people struck to her very heart. "You may well feel the indifference of man to our good, our loving God," she writes: "there was not a man to carry the Baldachin this morning; we had to get a boy from the school to carry the Cross. All running after the pounds, shillings, and pence. I never can feel the English have right faith, they are so cold and tepid. As our dear Lord's spouses, we ought to make up for this coldness to the best of our power. Never, never can we comprehend the generous love of our good God; it is as incomprehensible as our coldness and forgetfulness of this wonderful Mystery. Let us love, let us love, with all our heart, mind, and strength." When writing on this subject she hardly found words in which to pour out her heart. "The world is cold," she writes, "because it knows not Jesus; but for us, who know Jesus, who are loved by Jesus, who are fed and clothed by Jesus, and to whom Jesus communicates Himself nearly daily in the Sacrament of His love, what can we do, what ought we not to do, for this dear, this loving, this Divine Jesus! . . . May you ever increase in devotion, love, and faith to this Gift of gifts—the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, our hidden God, our Spouse, our Life, our All. . . . Drink deep during this holy Octave of this furnace of divine love; and ask of your hidden, solitary God, the spirit of recollection. . . . How cold are Catholics' hearts become! Did we think and feel as we ought towards this Divine Mystery, some would surely die of love. It humbles us to think we can do so little, and love so little a God whose very essence is love!"

The following passage, from one of her letters, is perhaps as characteristic a specimen of her style of writing and speaking on this subject as can be selected:—

"It often strikes me that, while we are sending messages to persons at a distance, we can save time, trouble, and anxiety by going before the Tabernacle of the living God;

even one moment would suffice. We have That near us which we often think far from us. . . . I feel the same in regard of miracles. What miracle can equal the Most Adorable Sacrament! A God with us! A God in dirt and rags! left in that solitude by His own creatures. . . . We want faith in this Sacrament of Love. Had we faith we should see our churches and chapels very different."

The following letter was written to one of her convents, on the Feast of Corpus Christi :—

" God Alone.

J. M. ✠ D. C.

June 13, 1851.

" My very dear Sisters and Children in Jesus,— I cannot let this Feast of *Love* pass without wishing you all to reap the fruit of this holy Octave, in which we commemorate the boundless love, the wonderful humility of our God with us. I wish I could obtain for all of you a sense of what you are in possession of, in dwelling with Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, the Joy, the Happiness, the Beauty of Heaven ; for we have, in our Lord and God, the most beautiful of the sons of men residing with us in our poor, mean tabernacle. To you, my dear Sisters, who have the honour, the happiness to be His chosen spouses, how will you spend this Octave? Will you spend it in coldness and indifference? Will you not leave the creature to find your Creator, and make some reparation for the coldness and indifference of ungrateful man, who is wholly unworthy of the gift he possesses? Let it be your chief pleasure and recreation, during this holy time, to spend it with Jesus your Spouse, the *only Solitary* in the House. And to you who are aspiring to become the spouses of the Immaculate Lamb of God, how diligent ought you to be in your continual visits to Him, to beg Him for every grace you need to prepare you for so high, so holy a dignity. Remember our enemy is watching to

rob us of this most precious favour ; he makes the way dark, dreary, and miserable ; but you will be victorious if you are faithful in giving all your spare moments to Him who lies hidden, solitary, and silent for the love of you. How often does His divine Eye and Heart turn towards the choir door, to see which of His chosen ones will pass one hour with Him ! Believe me, my dear Sisters, if you are faithful in going before our Lord with all your doubts, difficulties, and troubles, they will soon vanish, and you will advance rapidly in the way of perfection. Pray often and fervently during this Octave, that all may know, and love, our good, our merciful, our loving God ; that His temples may be rebuilt, that His priests may be holy, that He will vouchsafe to convert our unhappy country to the true faith ; but, above all, ask that those who are chosen from the rest of the world, particularly you who belong to the same, may be faithful to the end in loving, serving, and adoring Him, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I should weary you all before I should be weary of speaking of this Mystery of Love. God give you many blessings during this holy Octave.—Your unworthyMother in Jesus, MARGARET,

Of the Mother of God."

The anguish which she felt in beholding the poverty and squalor that is often suffered to surround the tabernacle of our God incarnate, can hardly be expressed in words. Boudon was her master on this subject, and his words and sentiments were often reflected in her own. As has been already said, the shock she received in witnessing the destitution of one of the chapels in the Potteries, was the immediate occasion of a dangerous illness. What struck her most on her return to England was the poverty of the altars, particularly in private chapels.

She had a kind of horror of deal tabernacles. On one occasion one was sent to us from a poor mission, with a

request that it might be painted and gilt. When it was finished, the Religious who had been employed on the work took it to show her. She examined it with so dissatisfied an air that the Sister asked if there were anything wrong about it. She did not answer for a minute or two, but kept turning it in her hand; then giving it back, she said, in her deep, strong tones, "Take it away! and mind, child, never *you* put your God into a thing like that! A plain deal box, nothing more!"

She was equally moved, though in a contrary way, on hearing of any extraordinary manifestation of faith towards the Blessed Sacrament. One of her religious, Sister M. Isabella Howard, was once describing to her a certain tabernacle in Spain, decorated, not merely outside, but inside, with rubies. She listened with such a strange expression on her countenance, that the speaker stopped short, not being able to guess what had distressed her. Our Mother burst into tears—"There child!" she said, "don't go on, it makes me ill; I don't know what I feel when I hear of their doing those things in other places."

Until the foundation of Stone, she trusted no one but herself to decorate the altar on the greater festivals, and after the increase of her duties obliged her to allow that duty to devolve on others, she always superintended the office of Sacristan, and gave special directions for the celebration of each festival. The last which she thus directed was the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1867, when the Forty Hours were celebrated, on which occasion she described, as she lay on her sick-bed, the way in which she desired the candles to be arranged, bidding one of the Sisters draw it afterwards and show her, that she might be sure that the effect produced was what she had intended. And it may be added, that the very last thing connected with any of the Community offices which was submitted to her approval, and concerning which she was able to express any interest, was a wreath of wheat and grapes intended

for the decoration of the sepulchre on Holy Thursday, just five weeks before her death, when she desired more to be made like them to improve it for another year. If the material decoration of the Throne of God had this importance in her eyes, yet more was she solicitous regarding everything that concerned the worship which was offered before it. Her religious children were accustomed to say that of all the saints there was none she resembled so much as King David. His royal munificence, his forgetfulness of human respect when he danced before the ark, his delight in singing with voice and heart the praises of God, and the exuberance of his holy joy in rendering Him the best of all things—something of all this was to be seen in her. She often expressed her devotion by saying she would like to *dance* before the tabernacle, and used to say that Father Faber had spoken the right thing when he said that on Corpus Christi *one could not stand still*. There was a thrilling exultation in her manner of chanting the Divine Office. On one Adoration day in particular, when, the Community being small, there were few religious in the choir who could sing, a priest who was present remarked that he should never forget the sound of Mother Margaret's voice, it was so clear and joyous ; " and yet," he added, " you could tell from the very sound that there was not a thought of self in it ; it was truly a creature singing the praises of her Creator." She burst into tears quite overpowered at first hearing the *Tantum Ergo* sung by all the people in the churches of Rome, and she never visited her convent at Stoke, without expressing her delight at the hearty way in which the congregation there joined in the public singing. One Sunday, when there had been Exposition of the Most Holy Sacrament, she came from the choir after service was over, quite overpowered. " O my dear child ! " she said to the Superioress, in her own simple phraseology, " it more than repays me for all that has been done in this place to hear these people singing

the praises of God ; *and to see those big men go down on their two knees !* "

In speaking of a subject which is literally inexhaustible, it is hard not to be diffuse ; but one feature in Mother Margaret's holy zeal for God's worship must not be omitted. It was her *liturgical* spirit. This was one of the points in which she reflected rather the antique piety of past ages, than the tastes and habits of her day. We have heard some Catholics condemn as preposterous, the notion that the Offices of the Church were ever intended for popular use. Such was not Mother Margaret's spirit. To her there were no words like the words of the Church, no music and no language like that which the Church has sanctified. She tolerated the use of English hymns and devotions for the people, but they were opposed to her taste, and she strenuously maintained the principle of training Catholics to take part in the Church Office in preference to every other devotion. " If I could have my way," she once said, " not a word of English should be sung in our churches. Very soon the use of Latin will come to be the only mark by which you will know the Catholic churches ; for all these sham Benedictines now sing Father Faber's hymns. Every child in our schools ought to be taught *the Christian language*." To a certain degree this injunction, often impressed on those who had charge of the schools, was carried into practice, and great pains taken to secure that the younger portion of the congregation should understand, and be able to take part in the public Offices of Holy Week, and other times. Nothing gratified Mother Margaret more than the success of these experiments, as when she heard her orphan boys sing a Requiem Mass from note, chant the Psalms of the Tenebræ, or take the part of the *Turba* in the singing of the Passion. She used to say that this sort of teaching was making them " real Catholics."

For herself, her delight in the ritual of the Church was

often too deep for words. " This Holy Week," she writes, " we have had all the proper things for the first time, I mean the font and the paschal candlestick. I suppose, as we get old, we get into second childhood, for I could not sing the *Gloria* for tears, I hope, of gratitude to God for all His mercies to us, and above all, for being a true child of the Church. The blessing of the candle and the font are quite soul-inspiring. You would wonder who could live out of the Church, or not love its ceremonies."

The revolution of the ecclesiastical year, and the corresponding revolution of feasts, fasts, and offices, were to her an inexhaustible source of meditation and delight. Her letters and instructions to her Religious took the colour of each season in its proper turn, and were often in great part drawn from the Gospel or Epistle of the day. She has frequently been heard to say, that were she shut up in prison, and allowed but one or two books,she would choose, in preference to all besides, the " Breviary," the " Missal," and the " Pontifical ; " and the last-named comparatively rare book was one of those which she had purchased in Belgium, and brought with her to England. Her love and reverence for the Office of the Church was exhibited, even in trifles. She liked every word of the Latin to be written rightly in the copied music ; and observing once that the writer of some part books had omitted those words taken by other voices, she was much displeased, and desired that every syllable should be inserted. The deep emotion roused within her by any solemn function often obliged her to hide herself away in some retired corner, to escape observation. On occasion of the opening of St. Dominic's Church, she could not trust herself in the choir during the Pontifical High Mass, but withdrew to a private spot where she could freely pour out her grateful tears. Yet her devotion, tender as it was, never rendered her less sensitively alive to what was going on, and from time to time she came into the choir to make sure that the excite-

ment of so unusual an occasion did not make the Religious neglect any of the proper ceremonies.

She used sometimes to say that she had no imagination, by which she probably meant that she did not ordinarily use that faculty in prayer. For, so far from being deficient in the gift itself, we should be disposed to say that it occasionally proved more powerful than her judgment; and certainly in the form of a deep appreciation for the beautiful, she possessed it in abundance. The Ritual and Ceremonial of the Church was her great poem, and awoke all the faculties of her soul in responsive music. It was no dead form of words, no mere assemblage of graceful acts, but a sublime language instinct with life in every part. And hence she was relentless towards any omission or neglect in the proper ceremonial on the part of her Religious. For herself, besides her wonderful knowledge of Church Ritual, she was richly gifted with the Catholic instinct which discerns, as if by inspiration, what is right and becoming in the service of God. "In all that concerned the service of God, or the decorum of the sanctuary, she had the eye and understanding of a bishop," writes Bishop Ullathorne, "though she never interfered in what belonged to the province of the clergy." The absence of this instinct in others, and the blunders thence arising, moved her with an indignation that could not be repressed. If candles were wanting where they ought to have appeared, if the organist began too late or too early, if a procession took a wrong turn, or if those who had to take part in any ceremony had not been properly instructed beforehand, her wrath broke forth in language that reminded one of the old prophets. She did not regard the dressing of the altar with flowers as a mere decoration, in her eyes it was an offering, something given to God. If, therefore, the flowers were not renewed sufficiently often, and if she detected a faded leaf, or a fallen petal, she would sharply reprove it as an act of disrespect. Her

intense solicitude that all should be done right, and her equally keen sensitiveness as to anything that chanced to be done wrong, especially when caused by negligence or want of forethought, occasionally made the great feasts times of questionable rejoicing to some of the Community. Well might she have applied to herself the words of the royal Psalmist, " The zeal of Thine house hath devoured me." In her it was " that effect of love," as described by one of our old Catholic divines, " which causeth grief and anguish in those souls where it reigneth, because they cannot abide that God be injured, and they cannot tolerate the offences of men. For when they perceive God so despised, Whom men ought so to worship and reverence, they consume away with grief."[1]

This zeal was not merely shown towards her own Religious. The writer well remembers standing with her at the window of her room one Feast of Corpus Christi to watch the great procession leave the church door, and take its way through the garden. The bell announcing the approach of the Most Holy Sacrament could already be heard, when a group of unmannerly boys, who were standing near the church, began to talk and laugh as though in the street. In a moment, as if by lightning, Mother Margaret was in the midst of them. What she said or did would be hard to say, but the effect was instantaneous. Big and little went down on their knees, and a dead silence was preserved whilst the procession passed out. When she returned into the house the expression of her countenance, inflamed with indignation, was something terrible ; it resembled the face of a lioness.[2]

[1] " The Garnishment of the Soul," Antwerp, 1596.

[2] The reader will perhaps be reminded of the description of St. Rose of Lima, which is given by her biographer. Speaking of that incident in her life when she was prepared to give her life in defence of the Blessed Sacrament, he says, " From her sparkling eyes, her lofty air, and the tone of her voice, she might have been taken for *an angry* lioness."

Her letters addressed to the religious of her various houses on the different festivals, if collected, would fill several volumes, and a selection will be given at length in a future chapter. Here we will only quote a few passages for the purpose of exhibiting her deep sympathy with the devotion of the season, and the fervid language with which she sought to kindle a like devotion in her children. "Another Advent!" she writes. "How good God is, year after year, to remind us of what we are to do to prepare for Him. If we read the epistle of to-day, it tells us we are to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ.* What a work for Advent! to become another living model of our Spouse Jesus! Here you see, my beloved children, St. Paul has cut out our work for Advent, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Do it, dear spouses of Jesus, do it with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Put on in deed and in truth the spirit and works of your Divine Spouse; He sees, and knows, and notes down every thought, word, and act of His beloved spouses." At Christmas, she writes: "Everything in the Church at this Holy Season preaches to us the Nativity of our dear Lord, the Versicles, the Hymns, the Antiphons, all excite us to prepare the way of the Lord. . . . Surely we ought to be the most perfect, the most loving of all His creatures! For us He is born; for us He lies helpless in the manger; for us He weeps, and our dear Mother Mary weeps with Him too, in union with her Son, for the sins of the people. Dry His tears, my dear Sisters, by the fervour of your love, by the sincerity of all your devotions, and above all, by the practice of the three vows of religion which you have pledged to Him. . . . Let us take our heart in our hands to the crib of our infant Jesus, and show Him all its wounds—all that is an obstacle to the reign of His pure love in our souls. . . . Let us listen to the sweet voice of inspiration that sounds from the stable, the crib, the manger, the straw, the beasts, for everything there preaches to us."

The Feast of the Circumcision always drew from her the most impassioned words regarding the Most Precious Blood, to which, like a true daughter of St. Catherine, she bore an extraordinary devotion. In Lent and Passion-tide she ceased not to direct the thoughts of those around her to the practice of penance, and the cultivation of a tender devotion to the Passion of Jesus. " Never do I go before God," she writes, at the beginning of Holy Week, " without begging Him that His generous outpourings of His most Precious Blood may be for the sanctification of you all. For what will all these great mysteries avail us if we do not apply them to ourselves, and so imbibe the graces and blessings that flow from the sacred wounds of our bleeding Bridegroom ? But if Jesus is a Spouse of blood to us and for us, let us not cause that blood to flow again by opening the wound of His sacred side (the wound of love by excellence) by our imperfect thoughts, words, or looks. Did we, dear Sisters, see Jesus hanging on the cross with all His wounds open, and the cold bleak wind blowing into them, our first thought would be what we could do to comfort Him. Let the same feeling animate us now ; let us endeavour to console and bind up the wounds of our Lord and God. . . . I hope you will all do your best to honour the Passion of Christ by some acts of penance. The sins of the world would call for this even if the love of our crucified Lord did not excite us to it. Would to God we could crush our proud sensual nature, and live and die on the cross ! "Again, in the Lent of 1862, she used the following words in an instruction to her Religious : " The sufferings of Christ contain in them the whole essence of religious life. They are the very house of prayer. The prayer of quiet, the prayer of contemplation all is learnt there. You can never read the life of any saint who has ever yet existed without finding that he became a saint through contemplation of the Passion of Christ. All religious virtues, humility, charity, self-con-

tempt, patience, mortification—all are learnt there. It is the beginning, middle, and end of everything. But you must begin by meditating on each separate suffering. The beautiful offices of the Fridays in Lent, which we have week by week, are quite enough to fill our thoughts." It may be added that she never separated the practice of penance from the sufferings of Christ, but made all penitential exercises draw thence their sweetness and their efficacy. "Never," she writes, "shall we have a lively feeling of the Passion unless we have suffered some such like things." And then when the Easter sun has risen, she writes as though her soul were overflowing with the Paschal joys: "This is the day that the Lord hath made! let us rejoice and be glad! The Church, like a tender mother, tells us when to mourn and when to rejoice; and now it is her will that we should be joyous with a holy joy—a joy such as is felt in heaven, where the angels see their God and our God face to face. May all your hearts beat with this true joy, my very dear children; for there is no joy in the world, in its ways or manners."

But perhaps of all the feasts in the year Pentecost was her favourite. Like so many of the saints of her Order, she had a special devotion to the Holy Ghost, and her letters written on this festival are both more numerous and more expansive in their language than on any others. One of her Religious going on Whitsunday to wish her a happy feast, chanced to observe that Pentecost was her favourite feast. "So it is mine," she replied, looking up with one of her most benignant smiles, "*I am so fond of the Holy Ghost!*"

In her letters and written manifestations she is often found declaring that she knows nothing of the sensible consolations which some pious souls experience in their intercourse with God, yet one was sometimes led to question the strict accuracy of such a statement, though it is doubtless true that her soul was fed rather with the bread

of the strong than with the honied food of babes. Yet the language of the Canticles was often on her lips, and words would escape from her which gave the impression of depths within which escaped her own self-scrutiny. She often repeated that "it is a martyrdom to love God," an expression which hardly requires comment, though we will venture to supply one from the inspired lips of a saint. When St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi saw in ecstasy the glory of St. Aloysius, she exclaimed, "Aloysius was an unknown martyr. For he who loves Thee, my God, knows Thee to be so great, and so infinitely worthy of love, that it is a great martyrdom to him not to love Thee as he aspires and desires to love Thee; and to see Thee, not only not known and not loved by creatures, but even offended by them." And this, we conceive, was the precise explanation of those words on Mother Margaret's lips.

We shall conclude this part of our subject by quoting the words of an Oratorian Father,[1] with whom she was on terms of confidential friendship. Mother Margaret's *faith*," he says, "was something unlike anything I have ever seen. It was totally distinct from anything ordinarily considered to be inseparable from the supernatural; no one was ever more merciless to anything which looked like a taste for visions or private revelations; but there was in her a marvellous realisation of all the objects of the unseen world, and, above all, of God. Her hold on supernatural principles was so vivid that she could not even comprehend any one not acting by them. She looked even beyond God's representatives, at God himself. This intuitive view of what was just and right often made her say, 'I can't speak, but I can see.' This again made her many enemies, and was the cause of many humiliations, which she sensibly felt from her utter inability to comprehend why every one did not act purely for God. It was a puzzle and a mystery to her, and caused many a con-

[1] Rev. Father Dalgairns.

flict between her profound submission to authority and her instinctive, imperative certainty of what was best and right."

The same writer has described his first introduction to Mother Margaret in so graphic a way that we cannot forbear from quoting the passage in this place. " My first sight of her," he says, " was when I went to Clifton to give a Retreat to the Sisters. She opened the door to me herself, and told me that she was portress and I know not what besides, as she alone was out of Retreat. As I came only to finish the exercises which the Sisters had begun alone, I asked her what point of them they had reached, especially whether they had ' passed hell.' ' Oh,' she said, ' they have never been into it. I like my Sisters to be led by love. I know some saints say that you must go to hell in your lifetime, if you want to keep out of it after death ; but, for my part, I don't want to go there alive or dead ! ' " These words of hers are not unlike some which have been preserved as uttered by her in the course of a conversation on spiritual subjects at St. Benedict's Priory. " When they threaten me with hell," she said, " I am not in the least frightened, for I don't intend to go there ; but I do tremble when they talk of the abuse of grace." Nevertheless, nothing would be more erroneous than to conclude from sayings of this sort, with which many who knew her were doubtless familiar, that her love and confidence towards God were unmixed with holy fear. On the contrary, it was a feeling which habitually exercised great power over her ; and on particular occasions, when she heard of persons dying, as it seemed, without a fear of the judgments of God, she would own how little she could comprehend their feeling, and say something expressive of the awe she felt in contemplating the justice and majesty of Almighty God. When Mother Imelda told her that she habitually prayed for the gift of holy fear, Mother Margaret seemed to tremble at the thought, and observed," I could not pray

for any more of that ; I suffer so from it at times, the very shadow of it terrifies me."

What can we say on the subject of her devotion to the Church ? She verily saw in it the spotless Spouse of Christ: she lived in its round of fasts and festivals, she gloried in its triumphs, she made its sufferings her own. " What times these are we live in ! " she writes. " It makes me heart-sick to hear the things that are said of God and His Church. It makes me wish more than ever to say the Divine Office, to bind us more closely to God and His Church. It seems as if we ought to be always in prayer." She perfectly fulfilled the maxim of St. Ignatius of thinking and feeling with the Church. "Hence," writes Bishop Ullathorne, " she attached the greatest importance to pastoral work—to preaching, as a means of grace, and to everything connected with the Sacraments, and even the Sacramentals." With what a reverence did she not regard priests and bishops ! As we have already said, she offered her convent as a home to two prelates in their declining years—" princes of the Church," as she used to call them—and many were the priests who were pressed to accept her hospitality and care in time of sickness. One of her maxims was, " We can never take too much care of a priest." Yet her very esteem for the priestly office led her to discourage, whether in seculars or Religious, that indiscreet devotion that cannot live without incessant direction, and she had an extreme jealousy of whatever tended to interpose the *inordinate* influence of any creature between the soul and God. Her words on this subject, and the humorous language she was accustomed to use regarding the lords of the creation, sometimes suggested the notion that she depreciated the priestly office, or was an advocate for religious women assuming to themselves certain of its duties ; but such an impression could only have been received by those who did not know her. It was her very reverence for the priest of God which led her to desire that

his proper influence should never be lessened by anything which tends to make the priest forgotten in the man. Of *men* in general, it must be owned, she often spoke hard things; but here, as in many other cases, allowance must be made for the exaggerated terms into which her love of humour and her tendency to the epigrammatic often betrayed her. Words are best interpreted by actions, and, as her children often remarked when rallying her on this point, severely as she could inveigh against *men*, and their manifold delinquencies, she possessed, in the wide circle of her spiritual family, almost as many sons as daughters. Her respect for the ministers of God often finds expression in her letters. "Pentecost," she says," has always seemed to me the special feast of bishops; and were I to imagine the Holy Ghost, (which, of course, I never could,) I think a bishop with his mitre on would first come to my mind,"—a curious remark, which shows at least how closely linked in her mind were the twin ideas of the Holy Ghost and the Holy Catholic Church.

Her devotion to the Church and its ministers naturally took its highest expression in her devotion to the person of the Sovereign Pontiff. The true daughter of St. Catherine, she, in this as in so many other respects, reflected and reproduced her spirit. She saw in the Holy Father only "the Christ on earth." How numberless were the prayers, Novenas, processions, and days of adoration, offered in her Communities for the needs of the Church! Sometimes she addressed her Religious on the subject in a strain of fervour, as of one transported out of herself; sometimes, in her familiar language, she spoke of the Holy Father's sufferings as a child would speak of some fond parent. "Bad news from Rome," she writes; "the dear, dear Holy Father! How I wish I could take care of him! Don't let us make a fuss about trifles when our Head and Father is in such trouble."

In the months of September and October, in the year

1866, when the affairs of Rome appeared hastening to their crisis, she ceased not to exhort all her children, as the daughters of St. Catherine, to "offer everything for the Pope and the Church." She bade them, as they went about the house, use as their constant ejaculations the words, "O Lord, help the Pope, protect the Church!" and teach the same to the children.

"Some of you," she said, "are always praying and thinking of yourselves: that is all self-love. Be more generous, and pray for what is of more consequence. As children of St. Catherine, whose precious relics we have with us, it is our special duty to pray for the Church." She never spoke of the sufferings of the Holy Father without a tearful cadence in her voice; in fact, her devotion to his person partook of that character which is happily so largely shared by pious Catholics in the present day, gathering up into itself, as it does, that passion of loyalty which once attached itself to thrones and dynasties, but which now pours itself out with truer devotion on the chair of St. Peter and the Vicar of Christ. We have lived to see that noble passion almost bring back the days of the Crusaders; and who should have a better right to share it than the daughters of St. Catherine—of her whose voice and pen were ever labouring at the thankless task of rousing the chivalry of Europe to draw their swords for the "Christ on earth"? Mother Margaret inherited nothing of what we might almost call the *military* enthusiasm of that heroic soul, but the devotion of her heart was not less entire. Her last fatal illness had already seized her when a Solemn Triduo for the necessities of the Church was appointed to be celebrated in every church in the diocese, beginning on the first Sunday in Advent. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed each day, and from her sick-bed Mother Margaret gave directions for the special devotions to be offered by the Community and all those under their charge. At her desire the Litany of the Saints

and the *Miserere* were chanted almost continuously during the whole time, the church being visited successively by the religious, the various schools, and the hospital patients, in such a way that the voice of their prayers and supplications to our Lord went up without interruption before His altar-throne.

The emotions of delight and veneration with which the personal presence of the Sovereign Pontiff filled her soul will best be described in speaking of her visit to Rome; but from that time she generally mingled some words of familiar affection with her expressions of sympathy and respect. At such times she would say, "We are true *Papists;* there is no doubt of that; and I thank God for it!" There was nothing she had a greater horror of than any sort of timidity or human respect on the part of Catholics when called on to profess their faith. The spirit of polite compromise with heresy was in her eyes treason, and she treated it as such. "In our days," she once said to her Religious, "the worst enemies of the Church are not heretics and persecutors, but half and half Catholics, '*rotten* Catholics,' as Dr. Milner used to call them, who are willing to come to a compromise with heresy, and want to teach the Church—they think themselves so wise; and my prayer for them is that God would make them fools. Let all who have to do with the children instil into them a great love to Holy Church. Do not use half measures yourselves; be bold and open in your profession of loyalty to the Church; let us have no compromises. When seculars question you, let them plainly understand that out of God's Church there is no salvation; that if they are not Catholics they will be lost, unless they are in invincible ignorance. And if they ask you who founded the Protestant religion, tell them 'the devil.' I never give any other answer, and I hope, please God, I never shall." This was her ordinary style of speaking on this subject, and if she thought she detected anything approaching to what she called "half-and-half"

Catholicity in any one with whom she was conversing, she took a delight in using yet stronger and plainer language, and would say, "Thank God, I am a *bigot!*" Yet it is worth noticing how very rarely Mother Margaret's "bigotry" ever gave offence. It was the same with her manner of dealing with converts. No one ever said stronger or severer things of their manifold imperfections, yet no one ever more thoroughly possessed the art of winning their confidence. "Bigot," as she liked to call herself in her style of humorous exaggeration, and trenchant as were her denunciations of convert conceit and convert ignorance, to none was she more truly a mother than to that much-suffering class. She was merciless to their defects, but she gave them a sympathy which attracted them to her guidance and made her hardest hits easy to bear. Moreover, it used to be remarked, that, however severely she dealt with them herself, she always took their part when they were attacked by others. She had an instinctive comprehension of their trials, and, with all her strong language, made ample indulgence for their weaknesses; and there was probably no community in England in which converts found themselves more at home, with fuller allowance made for the differences resulting from early education, and in which, at the same time, they were more thoroughly brought under Catholic discipline. Her loyalty to her Order was part and parcel of her loyalty to the Church—it had the same tone, the same deep and heart-felt intensity about it. "Thank God on your knees every day of your life," she once exclaimed, "that you are members of an ancient Order—an Order of Saints, an Order that has never been tainted with heresy!" Her letters are full of such passages. "Pray," she writes, "that we may have the true spirit of our Holy Father; without that, it were better we ceased to exist." . . . "*Let us all aim to be Catherines.*" Indeed, we might sum up her whole teaching by saying

that the spirit she sought to form in her Community was the spirit of St. Catherine of Siena.

One other devotion remains to be spoken of, the one which is perhaps most commonly supposed to have been predominant in her soul, the devotion to the Blessed Virgin. And truly it would be difficult to overstate the warmth and breadth of that devotion to the Mother of God, which held the closest place in her heart, next to her love of God Himself. It was no fine-spun transcendental sentiment with her, but a familiar matter of fact, that Our Lady was our Mother, alike unbounded in her love of us, and her power with her Divine Son. And how could she feel otherwise? How could one, whose Catholic instinct was like a sixth sense, and whose faith at times seemed almost more than sight in its clearness and intensity, fail in her perception of the dignity and the privileges of the Mother of God? Moreover, her life-long devotion had been well repaid. She never could speak without emotion of the favours, the protection, the tender and maternal care which she and her Community had received from this best of mothers. If she tried to do so, her words poured out mingled with her tears. "Who has obtained all these things for us?" she writes; "Mary, our beloved, our thrice loved Mother. Praise her, bless her, love her, confide in her, and you will be light with the light of God, and full of joy. . . . You have all a double reason to honour and bless our Immaculate Mother, for she is really the cause and instrument of all we have, in every way; she is truly the 'Cause of our joy.' . . . Never, never could I put into words all her bounty and goodness to us. . . . I know not what to say when I go to pray, but this one word, how good, how wonderful is God! May He be blessed for ever, and our Immaculate Mother who has done these great things for us. "What a Feast, what a Mother!" she writes on the Assumption, "the Mother of God, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost! What greater, what higher

dignity can we attain to than to be the children of such a Mother!" She constantly impressed on her children that in the foundation and growth of the Congregation, every grace, from first to last, had been received through the intercession of Mary. In 1862, when the cloisters of St. Dominic's Convent were finally completed, she had a solemn procession of Our Lady round them, as an act of thanksgiving to her for all she had done. Her words on this occasion have been preserved, and were as follows :—

"It is, of course, fit that we should open the new cloister by a procession in honour of Our Lady, as it is her gift. I cannot attempt to put into words what I feel about the Blessed Virgin on this Feast of her Immaculate Conception : it would be impossible. It is hardly credible to look back and see what has been done since this day seventeen years by one poor woman, without a name, without a family, without a sixpence, without a penny, with no help, no friend, except God and His Blessed Mother. As to this Convent she has laid it stone upon stone. Therefore, not for one or for two, but for all of you, to-morrow ought to be one continued act of thanksgiving for the favours obtained through our dear Blessed Lady. And what Our Lady desires of you is, that you should all be in your measure, *Marys*."

It was her invariable custom to keep all the Feasts of Our Lady by what she called "giving her a present." Sometimes it was a new vestment, or other church ornament, sometimes an orphan received gratis. In speaking of Our Lady, all the childlike simplicity of her nature came out without restraint. She would call her the most endearing names, and say how much she would like to dance before her as David danced before the ark. "I hope I shall be saved," she said, one day ; "I think the Blessed Virgin will not let me be lost, it would be very unkind of her if she did. I made a bargain with her that I would work for her, and she was to take care of my soul ;

so I go on and do what I have to do, and leave my soul to her." On occasion of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, her joy was that of one who had received some personal favour. She used to say that she *saw* that dogma. She was at Clifton at the time, and gave orders that the great bell of the Convent should be rung for two hours in thanksgiving. But this was far from contenting her zeal. She at once prepared to celebrate the event by a Solemn Triduo, such as would have been no uncommon manifestation in Catholic countries, or perhaps in our own in the present day, but which at that time appears to have given rise to murmurs. What ground of complaint the murmurers found in an act so religious, and one might say, so natural, it is not for us to examine ; on Mother Margaret's part, this much-talked-of Triduo was but the simple expression of her gratitude to God for a great and precious grace. She caused the interior of the quadrangle to be illuminated on this occasion, and went to very considerable expense, both at Clifton and Stone, in which latter place another Triduo was commenced on the Octave of the Feast.

Her devotion to Our Lady sometimes expressed itself in ways that were simply incomprehensible to non-Catholic minds ; and the more so, as the thought of disguising it in ever so small a degree, from prudential considerations, would have appeared to her nothing short of treachery. Receiving a visit once from a Catholic of high rank, whose devotion to the Blessed Virgin was well known not to be of the warmest kind, this lady expressed her surprise at all that Mother Margaret had done, and, as was not uncommon in such cases, inquired whence she could obtain the means for accomplishing such undertakings. " Every stone you see here," replied Mother Margaret in her most emphatic manner, " has been laid by the Blessed Virgin." We can well imagine how startling such an unqualified assertion must have sounded in the ears of her visitor ; but still

more so was the effect produced on a Protestant lady, a total stranger to Mother Margaret and her ways, by a conversation on the subject of Bishop Ullathorne's Treatise on the Immaculate Conception. The lady in question had read the book, and found much in it to object to. " Is it possible ! " said Mother Margaret; " why, when I read that book I was so delighted that I was determined Our Lady should hear all the beautiful things he had said about her ; so I took it before her (meaning her favourite image) and read some of the chapters to her aloud ! " She would often say that in heaven " she hoped to sit in our Blessed Lady's lap." Hearing of the approaching departure of an excellent priest from a place where the state of religion was not then very flourishing, and where certain devotions to the Blessed Virgin had been recently given up, she shed tears, saying, " When he is gone, the Blessed Virgin will not have a friend left in the place."

It is not to be told what pain she endured when any of the ordinary phraseology of Protestant disrespect to the Mother of God reached her ears. Every one will remember the delirium of Protestant bigotry which broke out all over England on the appointment of the Catholic hierarchy. No Catholic could at that time drive through London without having his eyes and ears shocked by some blasphemous inscription or disgraceful cry. Cars containing effigies of the Pope, Cardinal Wiseman, and the great enemy of souls were paraded through the metropolis as in the days of Shaftesbury, and the effigies were afterwards committed all together to the flames. In the city of Exeter, the emblem of our Redemption itself was added to the bonfire which was lighted before the gates of the Bishop's palace. But it was reserved for the Protestants of Bristol to conceive the idea of a yet more horrible exhibition. The proposal was made to dress up an effigy of the Blessed Virgin *and flog it* through the streets of the

ity. It is indeed difficult to imagine how a thought so tterly revolting could have suggested itself to any, even ominally, Christian mind, were it not evident that these utbreaks of popular fury often bear the signs of an nfernal inspiration. But when the tidings of what was ontemplated reached Mother Margaret, it nearly killed er. She wrung her hands as in agony, and turning her ace to the wall, exclaimed repeatedly, " I shall die, I shall lie ; oh, my Mother, I shall die ! " In a letter written at he time she expresses her anguish, and adds, " I must go ut and rescue her, I fear I shall not be able to restrain nyself." And she urged some of the Catholic gentlemen o take the law into their own hands, and " to go out and ight for the Blessed Virgin," wondering how any could be o tame-spirited as to keep at home. Happily, however, he outrage was never perpetrated, and England was at east spared so black a disgrace. And indeed the malicious lesigns of the rioters were in other respects also frustrated n a remarkable way. A mob gathered near the convent ne day, and were venting their ill-will in cries and abuse, vhen a gentleman stepped out of the crowd and proposed o them to pull it down, offering £30 to any one who would egin the work. But instead of increasing their excitement, is words had the effect of allaying it, and not as much as a stone was thrown at the windows.

Who that ever heard it could easily forget the tone of Mother Margaret's voice when, on the Feast of Our Lady she read the act of Consecration before her image, and with a kind of impassioned tenderness addressed her as ' Mother and Mistress of this house ! " Who would lose out of their memory the music of those words in the old and well-known Novena, wherein the Blessed Virgin is styled he " Pure Lily of the resplendent Trinity, my mother, my ife, my mistress, and my love ! " She recited them with a kind of joyous unction impossible to describe ; it was the child speaking to its mother, and giving free vent to the

tenderness of a child's heart. Although, in general, she could not reason and argue much about the grounds of faith, she often gave utterance to deep and profound things in connection with this devotion; and specially when she spoke of the relation in which the Blessed Virgin stands to each person of the Holy Trinity. Yet many will probably be surprised to learn, that she was far from liking the extravagant phraseology adopted in some books of devotion. She intensely admired Dr. Newman's celebrated "Letter," and was only deterred by timidity from writing him her thanks; but when, as it was read aloud to her, the reader came to that page in which he enumerates, in order to condemn, certain exaggerated and preposterous expressions, culled by a Protestant controversialist out of various foreign writers, (some of them on the Index), she stopped her ears, and desired that they might be passed over in silence.

Her devotion, *par excellence*, was the Rosary. She loved it as a true Dominican should, considering it the most powerful of all prayers with God, and the most acceptable of all offerings to His Holy Mother. What did not the Rosary obtain for her and her children? It was that prevailing prayer to which recourse was ever had in all necessities and in all trials, and never without result. The Fifteen Mysteries, recited daily and processionally for fifteen successive days, this was the instrument for effecting all which the world was pleased to call wonders. People who knew the humble origin of the Community, and the comparatively short space of time which it took to expand to its dimensions, would sometimes come to Stone, and express their surprise at all that Mother Margaret had done, and ask *how* she had contrived to do it; and she might have replied by pointing to her Rosary. One such visitor, Bishop Briggs, of Beverley, after going over the church and convent, said to her, "Mother Margaret what a wonderful woman you are

you must have a mine of gold down there," pointing to the ground. "Oh no, my Lord! nothing down there," she replied, "but I have plenty *up there!*" pointing towards heaven. "Our Blessed Lady is my gold mine; it all comes from her." She often called the beads "Our Lady's cannon balls," and in truth she had seen them lay low many an obstacle. "This feast," she says, writing on the Immaculate Conception, 1865, "is, and ought for ever to be, to all of us a day of thanksgiving, gratitude, and love; for we never can put into words what our Immaculate Mother has done for us. She has truly been our refuge, our help, our comfort, our mother, tender and loving. She *must* have pleaded, she must have prayed for and with us, for never could we have done what has been done were it not for our Immaculate Mother Mary. Love her then, my dear Sisters; be faithful in every practice that may advance her honour; let her holy Rosary be a continual new song that you are ever singing to God and to her, and she will reward every *Ave*—she has done it already."

During her visit to Belgium in 1856, a magnificent carved oak statue of Our Lady of Victories, exhibited in the town hall of Bruges, attracted her admiration, and, to use her own expression, she "invited her to Stone," though well aware that the cost of such a work of art was far beyond her means. Some years afterwards, however, this statue was brought to England, and, through the munificence of Dr. Northcote, was presented to the Community. Mother Margaret's delight was absolutely childlike; Our Lady had accepted her invitation; and when the difficulty of locating so large a piece of carving in the church of Stone caused some to suggest its removal to Stoke, she answered decidedly, "No, on no account, it was to Stone I invited her, and to Stone she has come." As it was found impossible to find a place for the image in the church, she began to pray, "that she might know where

Our Lady would like to go." She wished much to build a chapel for the purpose, and went about repeating to herself, " Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn out seven pillars." At last St. Anne's Chapel, in the garden, was assigned as the temporary resting-place of Our Lady of Victories, until such time as the contemplated sanctuary could be reared. The designs for this sanctuary, as they existed in her imagination, were superb indeed. All was to be marble : there was to be a " Gothic dome " rising over the canopy ; the sanctuary was to be on the top of a mountain overlooking the whole of Staffordshire, and fifteen little chapels of the Rosary Mysteries were to be on the sides of the mountain. All England was to come there in pilgrimage ; it would be a great act of reparation for all the insults offered to the Mother of God. Such were the bright day-dreams she loved to paint in hours of recreation, nor was she easily damped by the question of possibilities. " We have not got a mountain," observed one of her hearers, but she instantly silenced that difficulty, and replied, as though surprised at the objector's want of conception, " Well, child, *I suppose we can make one !* "

The thought of this cherished plan never left her mind, and in a letter written on the Feast of the Assumption, 1864, she says, " I hope before many years are over we shall see the pilgrimage to Our Lady of Stone opened on this glorious festival. I can think of little else but this building and seeing numbers come to honour Our Divine Mother." The nearest approach to a fulfilment of this day-dream was on an occasion linked with the sad memory of her own mortal illness. During the whole summer of 1867 her evidently declining health had caused the Religious in all her convents to offer unceasing prayers for her recovery, and their solicitude was shared by the children under their care. On the 16th of October 1867, the children belonging to the middle school of Stoke proposed making a pilgrimage on foot to Our

Lady of Victories for the recovery of Mother Margaret's health. The proceedings of the day are best described in Mother Margaret's own words: "To-day," she writes, "a *real pilgrimage* began to Our Lady of Victories. The children of the boarding school at Stoke, some of our own Religious, and some others, thirty in all, walked all the way from Stoke, saying the Rosary aloud, and singing the hymns of Our Lady. Our orphan boys went about three miles to meet them, and some of the Religious from here. No one made any remark, but carriages and horsemen stopped to look at them. They said the whole Rosary four times over, and no one spoke a word. Each child brought a good-sized candle in her hand all the way to offer to Our Lady. I am sure our dear Blessed Mother must be pleased *to have nine miles of prayer*. It was all offered that I might get well. I ought to be grateful for this. So you see our pilgrimages have begun: may our dear Lord bless them for the sanctification of the people!"

This, however, was the first and last of the Stone pilgrimages, such demonstrations in the existing state of public feeling being judged by Superiors indiscreet.

Our Lady of Victories was not the only work of art which Mother Margaret "invited" to Stone, and which afterwards found its way there in an unexpected manner. There hangs in the present choir a beautiful copy of Sasso Ferrato's celebrated picture of the giving of the Rosary, the original of which is to be seen in the Rosary chapel of the church of St. Sabina, on the Aventine Hill. This picture was made by order of the late John, Earl of Shrewsbury, and used to hang in the gallery of Alton Towers, where Mother Margaret first beheld it. She was no great judge of pictures, but the beautiful figures of St. Dominic and St. Catherine at once attracted her admiration, and in her childlike way, she *invited* the painting to Stone. In the summer of 1857, a sale took place of all the furniture of Alton Towers, and knowing the anxiety

she felt to possess this picture, his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne gave her leave to bid for it, through friends, up to the sum of £30. In the meantime, the Community were informed that a purchaser was prepared to offer the sum of £300 for this picture, which, although only a copy, was greatly esteemed. No one, therefore, bid on their part, and the consequence was, that the picture was knocked down to Mr. Sergeant Bellasis, for the sum of £25. It happened that this gentleman was one of the trustees of the Shrewsbury estates, and a party in the various suits that arose in connection with them. In the course of the Shrewsbury Peerage case in the House of Lords, in which the Rev. E. Estcourt was engaged in collecting evidence, it became very desirable to procure the adjournment of the case to another session ; and Mr. Estcourt proposed to Sergeant Bellasis to engage the prayers of Mother Margaret and her Community, for this intention, with the understanding that if their prayers were heard, and the cause was adjourned, they should make a joint offering of the picture to the convent by way of thanksgiving. To this Sergeant Bellasis agreed, only insisting that the offering should be exclusively his own. A Novena was accordingly offered at Stone, and at the last moment, evidence was produced which determined the authorities to adjourn the decision till the following session. The picture was therefore sent to Stone, accompanied by a kind letter from the donor, begging the Community to accept it, " not as a gift, but as a fairly earned possession."

No doubt some of the traits that have been cited above will appear childish to certain minds, who are unaccustomed to the degree of familiarity which devotion assumes in a loving soul. *Childlike* they certainly were ; it is the precise word by which we should depict one phase of Mother Margaret's many-sided character. In many points she retained to her last breath the sentiments, and used

the language of a child ; but it must needs be said, that her words at such times bore a marvellous resemblance to the language of the saints. Thus during her last illness, when suffering from excruciating agonies in the back, she one day said, " I am almost ready to fall out with the Blessed Virgin. *I tell her that if she had a bad back I would soon cure her if I could.* Oh, what a blessing that we have such a Mother ! Perhaps you think I take liberties with her, speaking in that way, but she understands me." The familiarity of affectionate devotion could hardly go further than these words, but how very like they are to the words of St. Theresa, when praying for one of her brothers, she exclaimed, " O Lord, if *you* had a brother who was in trouble, and *I* could relieve him, he should not have so long to wait ! "

Such language is beyond criticism, for it is the language of the heart, and has in it something of that " heavenly rhetoric, 'gainst which the world cannot hold argument." For cold-hearted as that world proverbially is, it has not yet claimed to reduce the language of love to the rule and compass of its own sobriety.

CHAPTER X

FROM the subject of Mother Margaret's faith and devotion we pass to speak of her religious life—not, indeed, the interior life of her own soul, but rather of her daily life within her own Community. One of its main features will have become sufficiently apparent by what has been already said. It was from first to last a life of incessant *work*. The labours which engaged her in later years differed in kind, it is true, from those to which she devoted herself in Belgium or at Coventry,but their amount remained unchanged ; whilst the constant bodily infirmities from which she suffered rendered her courageous perseverance in every duty imposed on her by her position little short of heroic. Making every allowance for that strength of organisation of which we have already spoken, and that ardour of temperament that carried her over obstacles insurmountable to souls of tamer mould, it must still be confessed that the burdens she imposed on her suffering body were such as nature alone could never have found the courage to bear. Rarely, if ever, did she permit herself a single dispensation, and, unless laid low by such an attack of positive sickness as could not be disguised, she continued to assist at every Community exercise, and to discharge even the least ceremony of the choir with an exactitude that often cost her dear.

She was always the first to rise in the morning, and the first to appear in choir. For some years she always called the rest of the Community, and when at last she consented

to resign this office, she continued to show the same alacrity in hastening to the presence of our Lord. A Sister, who discharged the office of sacristan, was perplexed at finding the iron grating between the choir and the sanctuary every morning half-open, though she knew she had closed and bolted it at night. The mystery was explained by her discovering that our Mother was in the habit of kneeling there when she first entered the choir, and that it was she who unbolted and opened the screen, that there might be nothing between her and the tabernacle. After the Divine Office was substituted for the Office of Our Lady, Mother Margaret continued daily to recite Our Lady's Office as well, choosing this morning hour for the purpose, and rising earlier in order to secure herself the necessary time. The spot where those fervent morning prayers were daily said was precisely above that where her remains now repose.

Her example in choir was one of the most precious lessons she has left to her children. The Divine Office was, as she often said, her refreshment and her delight, and no one could behold her discharging the choral duties without feeling that it was so. However much she might be engaged with guests or necessary business, she always found time to study her Office beforehand. The unction with which she recited it is not easy to describe—it always brought to mind one of Our Lady's Antiphons : *Corde et animo Christo canamus gloriam ;* or those words of the psalmist, *Exultate Deo adjutori nostro*, for it had in it a kind of holy exultation. However weary or suffering she might be, she seldom absented herself from choir. Sometimes, when they saw her unusually tired or exhausted, her Religious would urge her not to come. " Do not hinder me," she would say, " it is the only comfort I have." Rarely, if ever, did she allow herself the indulgence of sitting, except at the appointed times; but even during her last year of extreme suffering she would persist in standing, and would leave the choir before the other Religious, that

they might not perceive the exhaustion which this occasioned her. Her voice, so rich and full of volume, was always heard in the psalmody, clear and distinct above every other; and her manner of reading the morning and evening meditations was such as positively to rivet the ear. "I shall never forget," writes the Duchess of Argyle, who occasionally visited the convent, "the sweetness of her whole demeanour—her smile, the grace and truth of her words, her kindness, her courtesy, her modesty, her humility, her cheerfulness, or *the sound of her voice.* It was a remarkable voice, as if some very unusual one spoke; and her vocal prayers in the choir left upon me such a savour for the day, I used to say, 'How those nuns must be consoled and encouraged by such sweetness as that is!'" She read slowly and expressively, with a majestic simplicity which gave its full force to every word, while it was as far as possible removed from what is commonly called *fine reading.* She contrived to infuse a new meaning into the most ordinary and familiar words, and in fact it was in her method of rendering these that her extraordinary power as a reader chiefly appeared. A meditation-book of acknowledged excellence had been used during the greater part of one Lent, when one morning the Community were fairly taken captive by the beauty of the meditation, which was in a totally different style from what had gone before. In the recreation-hour they besieged our Mother with their questions whence she had taken this sublime lecture, to her very great amusement. "You have all been caught for once," she said; "it was nothing but old Challoner." This gift of hers was the more remarkable, as it did not show itself if she undertook to read any ordinary book aloud; and of this she was herself perfectly aware, often saying that "she only knew how to read her prayers."

In common with many religious Communities the custom prevails among us of saying the Cross Prayers thrice a day, before the Blessed Sacrament. Mother Margaret's man-

ner of performing this devotion was as characteristic of her habit of soul as any exterior act that could be named. Her whole aspect at that moment impressed you with the idea of one who was giving herself to God, body and soul, without reserve. The erect attitude and the firm out-stretched arms seemed to say, that every inch of her being should be for God alone.

Her addresses to the Religious in chapter were couched in a strain of unstudied eloquence, often rising to a sublime elevation, but mingled with that homely simplicity which gave such a *natural* tone to all her words. It was here she poured out all her zeal and fervour for the sanctification of those she governed. That was the absorbing desire of her heart. She was devoured by a thirst to see all her children saints, and whether she addressed them by letter or by word of mouth, this was the ever-recurring theme on which she spoke. "The only way for us to go to heaven," she would say, "is to be saints, and very great saints." When St. Dominic's Convent was being completed, she made some allusion to the subject in one of her chapter addresses, and concluded by saying, "And now, if this house is not going to be a nursery of saints, I would like nothing better than to light a match and burn it to the ground. . . . If I had the choice given me, I would rather bury you all to-morrow than know you would live on without any attempt to become saints." It need hardly be said that her ardour often found utterance in strong and burning words, though in chapter she always preserved calmness and self-control; but here are the terms in which she asks the pardon of her children for any harshness of expression which might at times have escaped her through excess of zeal:—

"*April* 26, 1860.

"My very dear Children,—As Monday the 30th is the anniversary of our Profession, I write to beg all your

prayers, that you will ask our Divine Lord to forgive all the many and great faults I have committed during these many years of grace. His mercy and goodness have been without bounds to me, His truly unworthy, worthless, sinful servant, and not one pure act have I or could I do without His Almighty Hand and help, so that He is first the giver and then the gift; and then He accepts and rewards it all as if we were the doers and givers. Oh, what love, what goodness, what condescending humility of our God towards us! Do, my dear Sisters, pray much for me when you are in the presence of your Lord, Spouse, and King. I could not put into words God's goodness to me, and my base unworthiness to Him, which He has so often and so mercifully overlooked. Beg that He will forgive my want of fidelity to grace, my negligence in His service, my pride, impatience, and, in fact, my innumerable sins. And to you, my dear Sisters and children, I kneel humbly in spirit to beg you will forgive anything I may have done to give you pain or uneasiness. Eagerness for your perfection, and a great desire to see you perfect imitators of our sainted parents, may cause me often to speak strong things which may give pain; but with truth I can say, it comes from a heart that loves you all in God and for God, and would go to any risk to save and perfect your precious souls. May God bless and perfect you all in His Holy Love.—Your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET, OF THE MOTHER OF GOD."

There were many to whom this language was equally familiar in their private intercourse with our Mother. "It was after receiving a reproof or a penance from her," writes one, "that I always felt her love and kindness more than at any other time. She would ask me what I had thought and felt about it, and would say, 'It is a Mother's love; do you think I should take the trouble to scold you if I did not love you?'"

Another of her children relates the following touching incident: "Having once incurred our Mother's displeasure," she says, "she had for some time used towards me a severity of manner, which was beginning to make me too much in fear of her. Perceiving this, she came to our cell, and going down on her knees, she begged my pardon, saying, 'My child, forgive me, I have been too severe to you. I thought it would be the best way to guide you, but I see I was wrong;' nor would she rise from her knees till I lifted her up. Then she pressed me to her heart, and said again, 'Forgive me, I was too harsh, but it was all in love.' And as if by way of making it up, for some time after that she used to put small boxes of sugar-plums into our cell, and would say to me, 'Here are some sweets to make up for the bitters.' I cannot express the effect caused on my soul by this act of humility, to see our dearest Mother at my feet; it did more for me than all the penances I ever had. It shed a new light upon my soul, and obtained for me a special grace. And her humility will seem the greater when I add, that I was then only a child of nineteen."

Another religious writes as follows: "She was tenderly compassionate to us when she knew we had any difficulty in overcoming a fault, always setting before us the great merit we should have. I remember once that she knelt down and asked pardon of all, if her words or acts had wounded any, or been too severe, saying her motive was ever the same, and done for God alone, and the sanctification of her Sisters' souls." The same religious continues: "One word, a smile from our Mother, always made the past forgotten," and she relates how, going to her once to acknowledge a fault for which she had received reproof, our Mother put her hand on her head, saying, 'Well, put it all away now; make an act of contrition, and remember, I haven't broken any of your bones; you will bless me for all this some day.'"

Here are her own words addressed to one who at that time was not accustomed to her manner, and sometimes suffered from it. " I am rather a rough lover, and those I love most have most to suffer. Do not judge by exterior acts what my feelings are, but be sure you are close to my heart. It takes time for us to understand one another. I must be quite at my ease with persons before I am even natural. This is mostly the reason why you see old religious quite attached to one another. They have learnt each other's character, and know each other so well that nothing is taken amiss, but this takes time. Believe me, I have to live in one continual suppression of feeling of affection in regard of you all. The eyes of all are on their Mother to see and observe if she shows more to one than another. I have ever begged of God to have the feelings of the most tender earthly mother to you all, and for all that are professed I can say with truth I know no difference, and would sacrifice any feeling to make you all happy, and render our Lord's yoke sweet and lightsome to you. But then I have another part to perform. You have all to be remodelled, and this is no easy task, yet it must be done to fit you for God. Some must have sweets, and some bitters, and this often does not appear as if done from spiritual motives. The child is hurt in its tenderest part, and the mother blamed for want of feeling."

Such were the sentiments expressed in her own beautiful language, which enabled those who were secure of her regard to endure her severity without suffering any diminution of their own affection. For she often made them suffer, a suffering increased by the very strength of their affection. Mother Imelda, who knew her well, was used to say of her, that no one ever possessed such power, whether of consolation or desolation ; a word or a look from her could convey either. The two powers could even make themselves felt at one and the same time, and on this

point we will quote a passage from the life of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, which aptly illustrates the subject. Her biographer, P. Cepari, is speaking of her method of training her novices, and he says, " She attracted hearts, aroused and enlightened them. At one and the same time she would look on one severely, and turning to another she would contemplate her with such a glad and happy countenance as would revive her, however sad or faint-hearted she might be. One she would reprove with severe and piercing words for the slightest fault, while she would tolerate or gently reprove the same or much more serious faults in another. With some she dissembled, as though she did not see their faults ; with others she was silent, avoiding conversation with them for a time, and adopting many other methods in order to cast down self-esteem in her children, and ground them in humility ; " and he adds that " with two words she could make any one of them enter into herself, and detect her faults."

There is much in this passage which recalls Mother Margaret's method of dealing with those under her care. Some who approached her were no doubt more conscious of her desolating than of her consoling power, for not the least remarkable feature in her character was what we must call its *many-sidedness ;* its aspect varied according to the various dispositions of those with whom she was brought in contact, or the degree of her own familiarity with them. With all she was not equally at home, and where this was the case, imperfect sympathy would produce a kind of shyness on her part, which manifested itself in restraint of manner. Yet on the whole, her power of attraction largely preponderated, and made itself felt on characters the most opposite, whether by nature or education ; converts or native Catholics, young or old, simple and learned, alike were conscious of the charm ; so that it was often said, she was like a " master-key, which opened all hearts alike." Those of feeble mould

leant on that immense vital strength which helped to bear them up above their own weaknesses; while stronger natures found in her a ready sympathy for those severer struggles which are often the lot of the strong. The very fact that her powers of mind derived nothing from the advantages of intellectual culture, gave a genuine inartificial freshness to all her words, which had a peculiar charm to those who had been long accustomed to the ways and language of the world. They felt, to use an expression which recurred again and again on the lips of her friends, that "there was no one like her." In our day, when strong personal individuality of character is so rarely to be met with, and society resembles nothing so much as a beach of pebbles, all washed and worn to uniform shape and smoothness by the ceaseless action of an ocean of conventionality, Mother Margaret's character came before one as though belonging to a more heroic age; she was of the race of the giants. The traveller through the valleys of Savoy may possibly call to mind the effect produced on his soul by the first glimpse of that spur of the Alps which thrusts itself through the tamer hills among which he has been making his way, and startles the eye with the astonishing sharpness and variety of its outline. If a geologist be at his elbow, he will be told that the wonderful diversity of form in that rocky spur marks it to belong to another and a more ancient formation than the green hills that hem in the valley of the Arc. It is granite, "the pillar of the earth." And if he have in him the artist's sense, he will not fail to render homage to the majestic beauty of that outline, even though its very magnificence should appear almost terrific. Something like this was the sensation produced by contact with Mother Margaret's strong original character, as it stood in the midst of a world of commonplace. It made one believe in certain features of the past, which a denizen of our own age and country is sometimes tempted to regard as nothing but

beautiful conceptions. After one had known her, such ideas were taken out of the realm of the imagination, and became plain living realities. Of course the granite had its sharp edges. To quote the language of Bishop Ullathorne who had studied her character long and deeply, " Her large nature and huge heart lodged a high spirit and fervid affections. Hence, whilst on the one hand her affections were warm and singularly attaching, on the other hand, that impassioned nature was apt to be moved with a quick and keen indignation at whatever took the shape and colour of wrong, more especially where that wrong was directed against the faith or holy things. Her struggle to conquer this ardour and indignation of her nature was lifelong. It cost her much prayer and many austerities. It was the one thing against which her last year's austere and sharp treatment of herself was directed ; and on her deathbed, she spoke of these movements of anger and indignation as the chief sins of her life."

There was one feature in Mother Margaret's method of government to which all her children must willingly bear witness It was the rare skill with which she preserved the discipline of her Community without sacrificing the legitimate freedom of its members. In the eyes of the world, indeed, and specially of the world in modern times, a life of obedience will always be regarded as entailing the loss of personal liberty, and there is a sense in which this is undoubtedly true. The religious who takes a vow of obedience, accomplishes a sacrifice the value of which is described in the words of our Constitutions as exceeding that of the other vows, in as far as the goods of the will, which are thereby offered to God, exceed in value all corporal or external goods. Yet there is a certain liberty of which the soul is not deprived by the sacrifice of self-will,and this liberty a wise and experienced superior does not merely respect but cherish. Nothing certainly was more remarkable in Mother Margaret's char-

acter, as a religious superioress, than the ample freedom which she allowed to each one in their own office, her aversion to anything like petty and harassing interference, and the large-heartedness with which she gave every individual room and space to act in. She never cramped a soul, or tied it up by unnecessary restrictions, but, to use a familiar expression, she gave each one "their tether." If she detected a disposition on the part of those holding subordinate authority to exercise it in a manner burdensome to their subjects, she at once applied a remedy. "Don't make mountains of molehills," she writes to one, "the less said about such trivial things the better. Religious would feel it a bondage if they were so closely watched." Her habitual charge to those in authority was, "Never make the religious life a burden, specially to the young." Strong and monarchical as was her manner of governing, and marvellous as was the vigilance of her eye, no subject of Mother Margaret's could ever complain that her rule was tyrannical or her watchfulness inquisitive. Abuses were quickly detected, and firmly corrected, but authority was only exerted to preserve regular discipline, never to vex or tease.

The point is one of such vital importance to the happiness of community life, that it becomes of interest to ascertain the sources whence Mother Margaret derived the principles that guided her in this matter. In part, no doubt, it was the *greatness* of her soul which preserved her from the snares into which little minds may sometimes possibly fall. But it was still more the result of her having fully imbibed the spirit of all those older religious rules, which, differing as they do one from another in various ways, are, in spite of their austerity, alike in the largeness and freedom of character which they stamp upon their disciples. The great patriarchs of the religious life, St. Austin, St. Benedict, St. Francis, and St. Dominic, jealous as they showed themselves to preserve

religious discipline, were equally jealous not to infringe *religious freedom*. Glance at the brief rule of St. Austin, and see how earnestly he enforces the principle that a superioress is to make herself loved rather than feared, and in heart is to lie prostrate at the feet of her sisters. Or again, open the rule of St. Benedict, the *Holy Rule* as it is called, *par excellence*, and observe, mingled with its deep spiritual lessons, that chapter on the *Prepositus* of the monastery, so full of shrewd practical sense, and of solicitude for the freedom of the brethren. "Some there are," he says, "who puffed up with the spirit of pride, esteeming themselves to be second abbots, and taking upon themselves to tyrannise over others, nourish scandals and dissensions in the convent; hence arise envies, chidings, detractions, and emulations." And then it goes on to assign the correction due to him who shall be "seduced by the haughtiness of pride." Nay, so remarkable is the degree in which the severity of St. Benedict's rule is tempered with this kindly spirit, that even the children brought up in the convent are protected from the indiscreet harshness of their superiors, "because it is written, 'What thou wilt not have done to thyself, do not to another.'" Nor do the Dominican Constitutions breathe a different spirit. Precise and exact on all matters of moment, and thereby providing a law and a remedy for every need, we find in them no unnecessary and burdensome *minutiæ*. "We promise obedience," they say, "to the Rule of St. Augustine, inasmuch as it much excels all other Rules in the Western Church;" and among the reasons assigned for this preference is given the following, that this Rule "keeps so just a medium, and never goes to extremes by the multitude or the fewness of its precepts, by being vague to obscurity or precise to severity."

But the letter of a Rule will not suffice for the guidance of one who administers it without that interpreting tradition which breathes the breath of life into the dry

bones of precepts and penalties. It was Mother Margaret's peculiar happiness to have inherited in many ways the spirit of that glorious saint, who, more than any other, presents us in her writings, as in her life, with the perfect model of the Dominican character, so far as it is capable of being impressed on the vocation of religious women. We allude, of course, to St. Catherine of Siena, who is in so peculiar and special a manner the Mother and Patroness of the Third Order of St. Dominic. Let any one but study the life and the works of that seraphic Virgin, "full of enthusiasm and full of common sense," and they will quickly comprehend how a soul attuned to that lofty enthusiasm, inspired with something of her passion for the salvation of other souls, and charmed by that heroic tone which breathes alike through her love for God and man, could easily find out the way of making the obligations of obedience not a burden, but a blessing, a glorious privilege, and not a degrading yoke. In the very chapter wherein St. Catherine claims for the Rule of her holy Patriarch the perfection of obedience, as its singular excellence, we find her likewise depicting the character of that obedience in memorable and beautiful words. "He made it a *royal* Rule," she says, "and did not make it binding under the penalty of mortal sin. For illuminated by God, the true light, he provided for the less perfect; for, although all who follow the Rule embrace perfection, yet in this life some are more perfect than others; and both those who are more, and those who are less perfect, are well provided for by Dominic in the ship of his Order. And therefore it is that the spirit of his Rule is so large and joyous, and as odoriferous as a pleasant garden."[1]

These words, pregnant with spiritual wisdom, precisely depict that *largeness*, that tolerance for the less perfect, and that joyousness in the service of God, which ever indicate the presence of the Divine Spirit, for "where the Spirit of

[1] Trattato della Obedientia, ch. iv.

the Lord is, there is liberty." They also convey a just idea of the spirit in which Mother Margaret ruled her Congregation, of the tradition which she has formed in it for the guidance of her successors, by means of which, far more than by any code of written laws, not only has discipline been preserved, but that other yet more choice and precious grace, a loving union of hearts.

At the most touching of all the ceremonies which are celebrated in a religious house, the *Mandatum*, or washing of the feet, on Holy Thursday, while the Superioress recalls, not by word, but in act, the humility of Jesus, the subjects intone together, the praises of that Divine charity. "*Ubi est charitas et dilectio, ibi sanctorum est congregatio; ibi nec ira nec indignatio, sed firma charitas in perpetuum. Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor; timeamus et amemus Christum Deum; ubi charitas et amor, ibi Deus.*"[1] May the yearly chanting of those exquisite words ever find the same response within our hearts which they awaken there at this moment!

That such a soul as we have attempted to describe, so mighty in its will, so fervid in its passions, should have possessed the charm of a childlike simplicity—that it could be winning in its tenderness and its genial sympathy, and that what was so great could make itself so little,—here was the wonder and the grace of Mother Margaret's character. To know her aright, it would not be enough to have listened to her in her graver intercourse with seculars, or even with her own religious, to have read her letters, or have studied her works of active benevolence: one must also have known her in those hours of familiar relaxation, when, sitting in the midst of her children, she threw off the pressing anxieties of her many cares, and was exclusively the

[1] "Where charity and love are, there is the congregation of saints; there is neither wrath nor indignation, but firm and abiding charity. The love of Christ hath gathered us together in one; let us fear and love Christ our God; where charity and love are, there God is."

Mother. The world knows little enough of the interior of a convent, nor would its inmates greatly care to throw open those hallowed precincts to the public gaze; but the thought has often crossed some of those present at a recreation-hour, lit up by the sunshine of Mother Margaret's presence, What would the world say to this? Where would they vanish, those phantasms of melancholy nuns gliding about in the dim religious light of mediæval cloisters, a prey to disappointed hopes and picturesque melancholy? They would depart, like shadows, into the realm of romantic legends, to keep company for ever with "The One-Handed Monk," or "The Mysteries of Udolpho!" Happy should we account ourselves could we recall some of those hours of familiar intercourse, when, free and at her ease, she sought to recreate the minds of others rather than her own, and became the life and the sunshine of all around her. Her notion of recreation was, that it should be real recreation. Gossip of all kinds she rigidly excluded, whether it were worldly or Community gossip: the families of the religious were never spoken of; she disliked the affairs of the schools, the hospital, or the poor, to be made a subject of conversation; and, in particular, she would never permit the faults and tiresome ways of children or patients to be idly tattled over. She desired that all things should be to edification; but, provided that the bounds of religious modesty were never overpassed, she had no objection to innocent merriment. She knew that minds engaged all day in the labour of teaching, or in other active cares, require at times to be wisely unbent, and she often urged on her children the duty of exerting themselves to make the hour of recreation agreeable and profitable to their Sisters. She liked some instructive book to be read aloud during a portion of the time, and never was there a better listener than herself. She listened with her whole person. If the book were of graver interest, the deeper chords of her spiritual nature were ever responsive to the slightest breath,

and it needed but a word, or the name of Almighty God, to elicit that sigh and that upward glance, which showed how true her soul was to its centre. The " Life of Père Lacordaire " was almost the last book read in this way during the recreation-hours, and every one will remember how she hung upon its pages, how word by word seemed to pierce her very soul, and how her tears flowed over that touching narrative of his last hours—too soon, alas ! to be brought back to the minds of her children as they watched her own. But she did not require that the books read in recreation should be exclusively spiritual. She listened with pleasure to history, even when clothed in its lightest garb, and had her favourites among the historical characters thus presented to her gaze. They were for the most part those in whom she discerned that absence of human respect—the fear of God triumphing over the fear of man—which, in her judgment, was the best part of heroism : Sir Thomas More, or Savonarola, or St. Thomas à Becket. When the life of the latter was read in the refectory, she gave it the silent applause of her eyes, and said afterwards that he was " a saint after her own heart." She attached great importance to spiritual reading, and considered it the best substitute for direction where the latter could not be procured. She always urged her Religious to devote to this exercise more rather than less time than the rule prescribes. She also encouraged them to cultivate a taste for useful reading of other kinds ; and, without attaching any excessive importance to mental culture, she was desirous that the younger members of the Community, and specially those engaged in teaching, should cultivate whatever talents they possessed. For herself a book was always a friend. It was a pleasure to take her a book, and read anything to her on a subject new to her mind, but with which her heart was sympathetic. She knew little or nothing of Church history ; her own Catholic habits, so redolent of the ages of faith, were instinctive, and had not been gathered out of

books. But if ever Church history was read to her, it stirred her with extraordinary emotion. A Sister recollects on one occasion entreating her to listen to one page of Fleury's History, describing the reform of the Church under St. Gregory VII. The first bell for Vespers rang before the passage was finished, and Mother Margaret, who had been listening as one absorbed, rose as though half-reluctant to forgo the unusual recreation. A day or two afterwards a happy ten minutes of leisure presented themselves, and the reader was summoned to finish with St. Gregory and St. Peter Damian, and to hear the burst of admiration which one great soul could bestow on others whose greatness it was fitted to comprehend. "Those were *men* indeed!" she exclaimed; "they cared for God, and not a straw for man; but now-a-days, I think, we have nothing but milk and water." All history, however, did not equally please her, and the impressions left on her soul after reading the "History of the English Church," by Canon Flanagan, were singularly painful. "I cannot say what a new light it has given me," she writes, "or the thoughts it puts in my mind. It makes me wish to bury myself in a cave and shun the face of man. I fear my old fault towards the lords of the creation will not be improved by it." Dr. Milner's Life, by Canon Husenbeth, on the other hand, drew from her the expression, "He was a *glorious* man!"

She was quite as good a listener to a story as to a book, and at recreation hours often called on one or other to exert their skill for the general amusement. Some of her children, who well knew how many a care must be pressing on her mind, took delight in providing themselves with scraps of the marvellous from Irish Hagiology or Uretta's "History of the Order in Abyssinia," for the purpose of eliciting one of her rich and sunny laughs. If the story were pathetic, it readily drew her tears, while, if it touched on the horrible, her extreme tenderness could not endure to listen, and she

would put her hands to her ears, saying, " If it is going to be dreadful, don't tell me ; I shall not sleep all night." Her simplicity displayed itself on these occasions in a thousand ways. Mother Francis Raphael, for the sake of giving her a few moments of distraction from weightier thoughts, once produced " Jules Gerard, the Lion-Killer," and entreated her to listen to the killing of his first lion. She listened with more than her usual interest, and at the critical moment of the sportsman's danger, forgetting that he had lived to tell the tale, repeated, in a tone of breathless anxiety, " The lion won't eat him, will he ? " When at last the lion was killed, every one laughed at her sigh of relief, and exclamation of, " God be praised ! "

As a general rule she disliked works of fiction, however innocent or dressed in a religious garb. " Is it *true ?* " was her usual query, when any one proposed to read or relate a story ; " I like to hear things that are *true*." She even disapproved the use of some kinds of fiction for children, such as fairy-tales, which she considered might confuse their notions of the supernatural.

But the encouragement she gave to such recreation as we have described was exclusively for the sake of others. For herself, whatever might have been her early habits, she had long since stifled all movements of intellectual curiosity. The habit of recollection which she enjoyed had not been gained without long and painful efforts. " During my familiar intercourse with our Mother," writes her most constant companion and assistant, " I could see how very severe was her restraint of all intellectual curiosity. Often, when something had been said in the parlour which she did not understand, she would afterwards ask me the meaning of it ; but if she found it was not necessary for her to know, she would stop my explanation, saying, ' That is enough ; I don't want to hear any more about it.' When we were travelling to Rome together she would never let me show her our route on the map, though I often wanted

to do so when I found her totally unaware of the relative position of the countries of Europe. She did not actually refuse to look at it, but manifested so marked a want of interest that I could not press it." This was in total opposition to the natural bent of her mind, which in her youth had craved for knowledge, and as she confessed to the same Religious, who enjoyed her entire confidence, it had cost her two years of painful mortification and restraint of the intellect before she acquired the habit of recollection.

She was too true a Catholic to be insensible to the instinct of loyalty, and among her other characteristics must be noted the peculiar affection and respect which she always bore to the person of the Sovereign. This feeling first took its rise on her hearing the blasphemous terms of the Coronation oath;[1] she was moved with sentiments of pity for one, compelled so young to pledge herself to expressions so revolting to the ear of faith, and from that hour she never ceased to include among the objects of her daily prayer, the conversion of the Queen. She also offered special devotions for the same intention every Saturday. But over and above this motive she possessed that genuine sense of loyalty which is, or ought to be, native in a Catholic heart, and often expressed her dislike of the tone which a certain section of the Catholic press of these countries allowed itself on this subject. Catholic newspapers sometimes fell into her hands. She cared nothing about news and less for politics, but would rapidly glance through their pages, and say in a tone of vexation and disappointment, " Not very polite of them, there's nothing about the Queen." Or she would gravely read aloud that " the Queen had walked on the slopes at Windsor," as if she thought it a most interesting piece of intelligence. A flippant remark about royalty having once been made in her presence, she severely rebuked the speaker, who was a convert, saying, " You converts will

[1] As it was framed in 1837.

never learn reverence; you do not know what a real Catholic feels for those in authority."

She could never bear certain forms of expression to be used, which, common as they are on English lips, grate discordantly on Catholic ears, and convey the idea of murmuring against Providence. If any one complained of the weather as too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry, it displeased her, and she always took care to remind them that "it was God Almighty's weather, though not perhaps His very best." Lamentations over temporal losses were equally repugnant to her deeply Christian sense. Some mischievous boys once took it into their heads to set fire to the convent hay rick; it was somewhat mortifying to see it smoking away in the meadows across the canal, and was one of those small events of domestic interest which are apt to furnish forth more than their due amount of notice. But the least approach to a grumble at such a casualty inspired Mother Margaret with a kind of horror and she silenced it with one of her strongest reprehensions.

She did not like the enemy of souls to be mentioned, even in grave discourse. "Do not speak of him," she would say, "he is so vain, he likes to be talked of." However readily she admitted into conversations subjects of general interest for the sake of recreation, the spring of her soul was always bent God-ward, and she took every occasion of bringing back the thoughts of all where her own were ever fixed. And so, when the moment of separation approached, she liked, before the Religious dispersed, to make them sing some hymns or pious songs, such as, "O Paradise, O Paradise!" or her favourite hymn of, "Daily, daily," the words of which she always kept in a little leather purse, and producing them on these occasions, would lead the singers with her usual heartiness of tone. The gleeful simplicity of her nature was manifested in her love of children, and even in her tenderness towards the brute creation. Children and young people were always at

home with her ; she had been used to them from her early years, and perfectly understood how to win their confidence. A little child by her side always seemed conscious of the huge protection it might find in her strength and her tenderness, and if ever she could be charged with the crime of spoiling any one, she showed herself most disposed to be guilty of this weakness in favour of those who entered religion in very early youth. She had such a delight in giving to God these innocent souls, wholly unstained by the defiling dust of the world, with all the bloom and perfume of their hearts kept fresh for God, that there was very little limit to the indulgence she extended to them. Those who had been brought up in her convent schools, she was wont to call " her babies." The sugar-plums presented as a peace-offering to one whom she feared she had offended, were but one instance of this maternal tenderness, of which a thousand others crowd on the memory. Nor, as we have hinted, could she exclude from her capacious heart even the dumb animals. It would be hard to say whether the cats in the convent, or the birds in the garden, most shared her benevolence, and as their interests were liable to clash one with another, she was sometimes perplexed to adjust their rival claims. Under the apple tree, already mentioned, a daily breakfast of crumbs was provided in winter time for the robins and sparrows, who took full advantage of her hospitality, and gathered there in great numbers. One morning, a Sister entering our Mother's room, found her standing at the open window, looking into her apple-tree, up which the grey cat had just climbed in search of prey. In her zeal to protect the robins, Mother Margaret had seized the first offensive weapon that came to hand, which chanced to be a broom, and had thrown it with no weak arm at the four-footed marauder. Unluckily it failed in its object, missed the cat, and only stuck in the branches,and a little abashed at being thus discovered, our Mother entreated the Sister

to find some means for recovering the broom, " or Sister ——," she said, " will be in a sad way when she misses it." This grey cat was a celebrated character in the convent, and was always getting itself into notice by its tricks and oddities. Banished by law from the interior of the house, it had its own ways of eluding vigilance, and sometimes found itself shut up in the cloister, with no way of egress. At such times, the cunning beast knew where to find a friend, and going to Mother Margaret's door, would make its troubles known by piteous mewing. Then, however busy she might be over her letters, our Mother would open her door, and go the whole length of the cloister to let the cat out unperceived, that it might escape a less gentle expulsion ; though, when detected in this act of condescension, she would show a little confusion, and feign a tone of severity. When the building known as " Job's " was about to be pulled down, and the masons had come on the ground prepared to commence the work of demolition, the cats, alarmed at the unwonted sight of so many strange faces, took refuge in the cellars, to the great distress of the children, who were afraid they would be crushed in the ruins. Mother Margaret fully shared their anxiety, and sent a timid sort of message to the workmen to try if they would stop proceedings till the cats were drawn out of their hiding-place. As the men gave a somewhat impatient reply, she had a candle lit before the statue of St. Anthony, that the cats might be found, and gave orders that the grey cat, when enticed from its dangerous retreat, should be brought to her, that she might satisfy herself as to its safety.

Nothing distressed her so much as the notion of anything, whether man or beast, not having enough to eat. Hence the lean appearance of the sheep on the Roman Campagna was quite a trouble to her as she journeyed from Civita Vecchia to Rome, and she insisted on throwing them pieces of bread, in spite of the representation of her

companion that sheep do not eat bread. The half-starved flocks of turkeys daily driven through the streets of the eternal city likewise moved her to compassion, and she every morning provided herself with crumbs, and stationing herself at the window,watched for their approach, that she might throw them some provision as they passed. These, we are aware, are very simple traits, hardly worthy, perhaps, of being given to the public, except in so far as they may help some to recall the least features of a beloved portrait. It is the trifling touches which give such a portrait its resemblance, and we could not find it in our heart to present the reader with the more heroic side of Mother Margaret's character, without, at the same time, introducing him to its homelier and more childlike aspect.

In her daily intercourse with her religious children, there was the same mixture of strength and simplicity. Those who were most sensible of her maternal tenderness shall describe it in their own words. " The care and thought which she had for each," writes one of her Religious, " was something that could not be told. With all her business, there was nothing too little for her to remember. She knew in the most trivial circumstances what each one would feel, and would be sure to say or do something to put the soul at rest. If any family trial befell any of us, she felt it more than if it were her own ; specially was she distressed if she had to break to any the death of a relative. On our feasts she always had a picture or some other little present for each one, and if absent, she was sure to write on feast days or anniversaries of our holy profession." Her maternal kindness to her religious children in times of domestic trouble is recorded by many who experienced it in almost the same language. " You would have thought," they write, " that we were the only people in the world she had to think for." In reading over a considerable number of her private letters, it is particularly

striking to observe how she recollects the circumstances or particular devotion of each one whom she addresses. She always finds something appropriate to say, alluding to some trait in the life or character of the patron Saint of the Sister, or something special in the office which she might be holding. Here is an extract from one of these letters addressed to Sister Anne Catherine Davies, whose Profession Day being on the Stigmas of Our Holy Mother St. Catherine, happened that year to fall in Holy Week :—

" I always fancy our seraphic Mother received the stigmata on Good Friday. It is the feast of hers I love the best, and I am sure you think and feel so too. You must love these sacred stigmas, and if you cannot feel them in your own flesh, try and desire to feel them in your spirit. It is a beautiful time to commemorate your espousals with the Crucified Lover of souls, for this week we do commemorate His sacred and adorable Wounds, that He received for the love of you and me and the whole world. Love His sacred Wounds, press them all bleeding as they are to your heart and lips, and try to imitate the meekness and humility that this precious balm instils."

" Our Mother," writes another religious, " taught us humility more by example than by word. She always spoke of herself most humbly. Sometimes she would ask how a thing ought to be done, or how to spell a word, and then she would say, ' See what an ignorant Mother you have got," or, ' What a good-for-nothing old Mother,' or something of that sort. . . ." She was ashamed neither of her lowly origin nor of her imperfect education, and would speak of both these disadvantages, as the world regards them, with unaffected simplicity. " Always be kind to servants, for your Mother's sake," she would say ; and she would call on any of her children who happened to be at hand to assist her in spelling a word, or studying the lessons of the Office, generally making some such remarks as those above quoted. This latter manifestation of

humility never seemed to be forced or put on, but was expressed as naturally and simply as the rest.

"I never went to her room," says another religious, "without learning something. I never felt her reproofs chill me; on the contrary, they seemed new ties which bound me to her more closely." Her singular quickness of perception frequently gave her an insight into the interior of others, which enabled her to read their very thoughts. A young novice, Sister M. Stephana Blackborrow, confessed that being once engaged in sweeping some matting, she was tempted to murmur at the hard work when our Mother passed by on her way to her room. Her quick glance had probably discerned the feelings expressed on the countenance of the other, for she presently opened her door, and, calling her in, gave her a little picture of the infant Jesus sweeping the house of Nazareth, saying, "Here is something that if you look at will make all your work easy." The same young religious had received directions to do a particular piece of work, and the thought how she should set about it was occupying her mind in choir, and causing her distractions, when our Mother came up to her as she stood in her stall, and said, "Child, why are you letting that work distract you and keep you from the presence of God?" Sister Francis Raphael, when a young religious, had been changed week after week from one employment to another, till her patience became somewhat tried, and she more than once found herself giving way to the thought that she was being made nothing but a *stop-gap*. Going one morning into our Mother's room, she was saluted by the words," Well, Sister *Stop-gap*, what a good thing it is to have some *stop-gaps* in the house," and she was obliged to acknowledge how exactly our Mother had read her thoughts. The same religious was very desirous to go to Holy Communion on a day which was not a general communicating day, but feeling a hesitation about asking permission to do so, she contented

herself with praying to her angel that if it were the will of God something might happen to enable her to go. Just as the Mass began, our Mother touched her on the shoulder, and whispered, "You can go to Communion to-day if you like." Incidents very similar to this are narrated by two other religious. "She often read our hearts," says one, "and told us to do things we were wishing for, but did not like to ask. I remember once in particular I had a great desire to go to Holy Communion for a person lately dead, but as she was not more to me than to the rest of the Community I did not like to ask permission. I asked my angel guardian to arrange it for me according to the will of God, and just before Mass our Mother came to me and told me if I liked to go to Communion for that person I might." The other example is almost identical in its character. A religious was wishing to go to Communion for a relative who was lying ill, when she was told that our Mother desired to speak to her. Going to her, she said, "You would like to go to Communion for ——, would you not? You may go." "Dear Mother," said the religious, "it is just what I was wishing for!" "Well," she replied, "thank your angel for telling me." "Another time," continues the writer who relates this last anecdote, "when our Mother was away, I felt, without knowing why, a great sense of compunction, and a great desire to amend my faults. For days these thoughts were continually before me, when, quite unexpectedly, I had a letter from our Mother (to whom I had not written) reading my whole soul to me, and telling me that I had been especially before her at that time; and that week she wrote me three long letters so beautiful and so clear in their direction that I always carried them about me, and made an act of thanksgiving whenever I read them."

In a general way the experience of most would probably be that her manner of guiding others was rather by act than by word. She was not an advocate for very minute and

burdensome direction which might hamper the freedom of the soul, or interfere with the action of God. She contented herself with inculcating a few great principles, such as purity of intention, and the habit of acting for God alone. She did not encourage any such exercises as would have tended to foster a constant self-inspection ; her aim was always to detach the soul from self, and throw it upon God. The practice of what is called *manifestation of conscience*, which has existed among religious persons in one form or other from the time of the Fathers of the Desert, is not mentioned in the Dominican constitutions, nor is it, strictly speaking, of obligation. As practised in the older Orders it belongs rather to the healthy traditions of religious life, and to that loyal confidence in superiors which is of its very essence. A religious Superioress is a Mother, and, as a Mother, enjoys the confidence of her children : this spirit, so essential to the preservation of union and good discipline, is cherished by every part of the religious system ; but the practice of manifestation is not made obligatory on the consciences of the Religious. Secure of this confidence, Mother Margaret was never exacting. Sister M. Gabriel Du Boulay, after an interview in which she had opened her whole soul to our Mother, expressed her regret that such opportunities of speaking heart to heart were of such rare occurrence. " It would be waste of time ; " she replied ; " better to speak heart to heart with our Beloved." Most will be able to recall some powerful word of this kind said from time to time, leaving behind its indelible impression ; such as that frequent exhortation to " begin with fidelity," and that as constant reminder to " do all for love." " Try and do everything for love," she writes ; " speak for love, think of love, work for love, sigh for love ; never seek any other love than that of our Beloved Jesus. Oh, Name of love, may we all have no other love than His ! "

Sister Mary Peter Moore, who, during her novitiate,

suffered much from interior aridity, declared that a new light seemed shed on her soul by our Mother's manner of repeating the well-known maxim, " Seek rather the God of consolation, than the consolations of God." Another of her favourite maxims was, " Always act on principle, never on feeling ; " and again, " We cannot *know* Christ unless we *practise* Christ ; " and she often repeated these latter words when recommending the practice of mortification. Her words of dismissal generally were, " God bless you, child, and make you a saint," sometimes it was " a *big* saint ; " for however familiar the conversation might be, she seldom failed to remind those whom she addressed of the end of their high vocation.

" What struck me most in our dearest Mother," writes Sister M. Francis Lynch, " was her largeness of heart, and the total absence of self in all her words and actions. We could call her nothing but ' Our Mother," for if she felt from her inmost soul with the Church, every feeling of her heart was with and for her children. Our cares, our crosses, and our pleasures were all hers." When visiting any of the smaller convents, she seems to have pleased herself by occasionally taking a part in the ordinary work of the house, and practising various acts of humiliation, with greater freedom than she could do at Stone. Thus a young Religious was once distressed by her presenting herself as her aid in the refectory ; and letters from the other houses frequently allude to similar incidents. No doubt she felt it a recreation to be occasionally released from the far more wearisome duties which devoured her time at Stone. There, her days were divided between the guest-house and her writing-table, and subject to the incessant interruptions of business. Her correspondence was prodigious ; nor can we venture on anything like an estimate of its real extent. She overlooked the affairs of her distant houses in their minutest details : and to read her correspondence with the local

Superioresses, you would gather the idea that she was personally present in each house, and that she had each member of the Community—we had almost said each article of furniture—distinct in her mind's eye. In addition to the daily intercourse which she kept up with her own religious Sisters, she had to answer the demands of friends, and few persons possessed a wider circle of friends than Mother Margaret. Of course, a very large portion of necessary correspondence was carried on by others, but there were certain letters which Mother Margaret always wrote with her own hand. One day, at a time when much important business was awaiting settlement, the Religious who acted as her confidential secretary observed that the first letters which she dispatched were addressed, one to an old woman whom she had known in Belgium, and to whom she wrote offering her a home in the hospital; and the other to a person also in distress, whose sick boy she was going to receive into the Orphanage, free of expense. Having made some remark on her writing these letters with her own hand, when so many others were awaiting reply; "Yes," observed Mother Margaret, "there are plenty more to be written, *but I always like to put the unfortunate first.*"

The thought and attention which she bestowed on what some would consider minor points of detail, would hardly be credited. Every subject connected with the government of her five Communities, and the particular requirements of each Sister, were made the subject of anxious reflection and earnest prayer. She never decided on the least thing, such as the removal of a Religious from one house to another, without recommending it to God. On one occasion, when a change of this sort had been determined on, she exclaimed to her companion, "How I have prayed to know who to send! Truly prayer is my light!" Circumstances sometimes occurred which proved in how marked a way she was guided by God, in these apparently

indifferent matters. In the early part of 1863, it had been arranged that a certain number of the Religious from Clifton should come to Stone to be present at the opening of the church. Mother Margaret hesitated for some time whom to select, and only at last decided after much prayer, and many times changing her mind. Two of those who were finally chosen, Sister M. Catherine Robinson and Sister M. Josephine Chisholm, had hardly reached Stone before they received the intelligence of heart-rending domestic afflictions, and felt most grateful in this time of trial to be able to receive the support and consolation which none could give so well as Mother Margaret. She might truly say that " prayer was her light," and it was a light that never failed her. She loved to associate with herself those whom she called " her aids," some of her religious Sisters, the patients in the hospital, the children in the schools, and certain members of the Congregation, commonly known as " our Mother's old women." At the day of judgment it will be revealed what share these humble unknown souls may have had in obtaining many a grace from the Heart of Jesus, attributed, perhaps, to far different sources.

Mother Margaret's singular influence over others was quite as much manifested in her intercourse with seculars as with her own religious children. Some of those who had been on intimate terms with her described her loss as " something gone out of their life." " She seemed," says one, " to belong especially to each one, and always to make one's interest her peculiar care. I have often thought how wonderful it was how she found time for everybody's needs. I have many times written to her about things purely personal, or relating to friends, or persons in trouble, and almost without exception have received answers within a few days, often by return of post. I used to wonder how it could be that she could at once enter into

it all, and advise and help as if it were the only thing in her mind, knowing, as I did, all the cares and wide interests which claimed her attention."

This last observation finds its echo again and again in the letters of her secular acquaintance. One who knew her only by a single visit writes to thank the friend who introduced them to one another, saying, " I have so often thought of your words, ' You will feel at once that you have found a mother who will take you to her heart ; ' it was exactly what she seemed to do, and the kind, loving letters I have from her will now be most precious to me." " I have no one now left," says another, " who will take the same kind interest in me or my children as she did ; she was everything to them, and always advised me what to do for their interest, body and soul." " I shall long remember her as my best and dearest friend," writes another ; " to whom I owe more than I could say." " Her affection towards myself," says another, " I have ever looked on as a special blessing from our Lord." " I always felt," writes another heart as warm and tender as her own, " that she was *my* mother outside the convent, as she was *yours* inside." " *Her* friendship has never failed," says another ; " at whatever interval of time one saw her again, she was quite certain to be the same, ever sympathising, indulgent, and affectionate. Her loss leaves a void in my heart which makes me very sad." Words like these might be quoted to weariness ; and it is not too much to say that her relations with those outside her own Community made her loss as much felt in the world as within the walls of her own convents. " Who shall tell the number of persons in the world," says Bishop Ullathorne, " whose minds or whose course of life have been happily settled by her wise and judicious counsels ? Gentlemen as well as ladies, priests as well as seculars, rich as well as poor. And how many of them have been able to trace some turn in the tide of their life to her searching or

encouraging words! Not that she sought them, but they sought her, and could not resist giving her their confidence. And when once a person had given their confidence to her, she never lost sight of them or forgot to pray for their necessities."

These remarks apply equally to persons of all classes who were wont to consult Mother Margaret, not only on spiritual matters, but on their personal and domestic affairs, applying to her as to a real mother in all their troubles and concerns. Her compassion for poor tradesmen was very great, and she would never allow them to wait for their money. She once gave a considerable order to a carpenter who had recently set up in business, expressly to help him through his first difficulties. He himself, after her death, related that, being sent for to the convent one day, he feared he was going to be dismissed, as he knew he had been dilatory over the work. To his great surprise, Mother Margaret said to him, "I know, Mr. Beresford, you must be short of money, and the wood will be an expense to you; so I will advance you part of the price at once." He was so overwhelmed he hardly knew what to say. This timely assistance enabled him to buy his materials and finish the work quickly, and with greater advantage to himself. But it was the *kindness* of the act which especially struck him. "I felt that she thought of me and cared for me," he said, "and that is what no one else ever did."

Yet Mother Margaret's immense *popularity*—if we must use a word open to some objections—was not gained by any sacrifice to human respect. She could adminster a reproof as well as afford consolation. She sometimes even spoke with a warmth which she afterwards regretted, and for which she would atone by a frank acknowledgment, which could not fail to touch the hearts of those to whom it was addressed. Whenever it was expedient to do so, she spoke out in a plain and straightforward way, and her dread lest human prudence should ever take the form of

insincerity was perhaps excessive. Sometimes she would give her gay visitors a hint on the subject of dress. "You ladies will have a long purgatory," she once observed to the Duchess of Argyle. "Why so?" was the reply. "Why, look at those long trains of yours; you cannot say they are necessary to keep up your state, and the value of that silk would keep many a poor child." Yet in general she liked to see ladies dress according to their rank. If, however, she was aware that the contrary habit arose from religious motives, as in one case which came under her observation, it pleased her; but she was perfectly willing to admit the reasonable claims of rank and position. She did not even withhold a frank expression of her opinion from ecclesiastics. Writing to Rev. Dr. Northcote with whom she was on terms of intimate friendship, she says: "I wish you would put in practice those strong inspirations of the Holy Ghost. You have enough in you to reanimate the faith of thousands. Much of your languor and weakness would disappear did you give out what is within you. I have often felt much when I have seen you so absorbed in books, and I have begged our Lord with tears that He would give you light and grace for the sanctification of the people. I know an ecclesiastic must not be ignorant, and has much to read; but experience will also give knowledge, and it has always seemed to me that you had a power within you that could do anything."

A young priest, assisting at the Sunday services at one of her convents, showed some reluctance to preach, partly through shyness, and partly through the mistaken notion that nuns must be severe judges of spiritual things. "Good people," she replied, "do not criticise sermons,and a young priest ought to be too glad of any opportunity of gaining souls to God." Her character, and the universal respect with which she was regarded, enabled her, without impropriety, to offer this sort of maternal rebuke, for, like St. Catherine, many even in the ranks of the priesthood were

accustomed to address her as " Our Mother." But to these she never failed to convey her advice in some way that marked her reverence for their office. " If your task is now distasteful to you," she says to one whom she is exhorting to persevere in a difficult but important undertaking, " it is that you do not put your whole powers into it. It is a holy work, a laborious work, a mortifying work, so do not lose the merit of it, for it has every ingredient to make it acceptable to God, if you will but have courage and patience. Let me tell you, my dear Rev. Father, that patience is the one great thing you want ; " and then she adds, with her native gracefulness, " You know my real affection for you, and as you call me *mother* sometimes, mothers may take liberties with great doctors, if they are their sons : to me you are father, son, and brother."

Her varied relations with the world often brought her in contact with those of the highest rank, but her simplicity always remained unchanged. She laughed in telling her children of her being driven to a railway station in the carriage of a duchess. " I drew down the blinds," she said, " for I felt so ashamed." Invited to a great house, where one of the family, lying dangerously ill, desired to see her, she writes as follows : " I was amused at the station to find a carriage and livery servants waiting for me. I said to myself, What next ? I pulled the blinds down, for I was ashamed to be seen in it. Then I was put into the best bedroom. There the humiliation was not so great, for the uncomfortable feel of the bed and the restless night made up for the grandeur of the rest. Oh, blessed religious life, where the hardest things become the sweetest ! "

In travelling she did not refuse to enter into conversation with her companions when invited to do so, and those who have accompanied her on these occasions can hardly have failed to have been struck with the admirable prudence of her words : always affable and simple, and without the least tincture of that puritanic solicitude to be

edifying which so often causes disgust, they were always good words, and frequently bore their fruit. Occasionally, indeed, people made mistakes, and carried away no higher notion of Mother Margaret than that she was a genial, good-humoured woman, not averse to the good things of this life, who looked, as one person expressed it, " as if she had never had a care." They were totally unaware of the intense physical suffering she was often enduring in the parlour or the railway carriage, where her words were so pleasant, and the very tone of her voice so cheering. " The exterior quarters of her convents," says one, who knew more than others the sacrifices which she imposed on herself to obey the calls of charity or hospitality, " were to her like a place of execution ; yet who of all her numerous visitors would have suspected this ? " In fact, as she often confessed, nothing caused her so much physical exhaustion as talking, and after an hour or two spent in the parlour, she would return to her room, worn out and suffering, and say to her companion," How hard we do work for our salvation ! "

There was another way in which she was sometimes misapprehended by those whose acquaintance with her was superficial. Gifted as she undoubtedly was, not merely in the spiritual, but even in the intellectual order, and endowed with that power of eloquence which is the appanage of the Celtic race, her words could not always keep pace with her ideas. She possessed in an eminent degree that quality which Wordsworth has praised in the poetess Miss Jewsbury, of whom he says that " in quickness in the motions of the mind she possessed no equal." This quality, so essentially feminine, is perhaps the one of all others which most demands the advantage of mental cultivation. Intellectual training teaches the mind to know precisely what it thinks, and to say distinctly what it means, and without it a great mind may often be in the position of the child who tries its teacher's patience with the oft-repeated formula of, " I know what I mean, but I can't say

it." In a general way, no one better knew how to say what she meant than Mother Margaret, as the numerous extracts already given from her letters will sufficiently prove; but her eloquence was always unstudied, and often, specially when speaking on matters of business, her thoughts flowed faster than her words, and the result was a certain fragmentary mode of speech, perfectly comprehended by some of her own children who could supply the ellipses, but often puzzling to strangers. In point of fact, you often found it as hard work to follow her ideas as to take a sketch from the window of an express railway carriage; by the time the pencil had traced the first line you would find yourself whirled away to a fresh landscape. The result was that persons sometimes carried away a very unfavourable idea of her mental abilities; they were ignorant of the elevation and grandeur of language which she could pour forth at times when the tongue was giving free utterance to the language of the heart.

Some, perhaps, found their notions on this head confirmed by the fact that Mother Margaret never mastered the art of orthography. A learned historian of the Dark Ages has not feared to own that he finds an inexpressible charm in the grammatical solecisms of the mediæval scholars; and we will therefore confess that the faults in spelling in Mother Margaret's letters are things we could never find it in our hearts to wish away. There was something so touching, so characteristic, so suggestive of her whole life and history, so redolent of her own childlike simplicity, to receive a letter of spiritual advice not unworthy of the pen of St. Theresa, in which one was desired to "crush troublesome thoughts like so many *nats*," (gnats), or in which a postulant of higher pretensions than ordinary was warned that she would find the Community "very *simpel* people." Many years after the establishment of the Community, a letter fell into the hands of one of the Religious, written by Mother Margaret in the early days of her

first foundation at Bristol. It was couched in the same grand style as her later compositions, sounding forth the trumpet-note, " God's glory and the salvation of souls ! " " And only see," said the Religious, in a tone of fond admiration, to the Sister to whom she showed it, " all through the letter our dearest Mother was spelling *little* with one *t !* " (*litel.*)

We have insensibly wandered from the spiritual to the intellectual side of Mother Margaret's character, and it may therefore not be out of place to say, that besides her encouragement of art and useful studies in those more immediately under her influence, she had a special devotion to giving away useful books. It was one of her favourite means of profiting her neighbour, and counteracting the pernicious effects of bad and trashy reading. The versatility of her own mind was extraordinary ; she knew how to adapt herself to all with whom she spoke, whatever were their tastes or their profession. She laid her large hand on the head of a young naval officer, Mr. Forrest, brother to Sister Catherine Aquinas, just about to set out for the African station, and gave him such a warm maternal blessing, and " God go with you ! " that in his gratitude he exclaimed, "Mother Margaret, I must bring you something from Africa ; would you like a parroquet ? " Nor did she damp him with a refusal, though parroquets are not very common pets in a religious Community. She could address herself with equal felicity to the soldier or the student, and we will conclude this chapter with two specimens of her epistolary style, the first of which is addressed to a young officer stationed in Canada, in whom she felt a more than common interest[1], and the second to a person engaged in literary labours.

[1] The Hon. H. E. Dormer. This lamented young officer died at the age of twenty-two, in the October of the year 1866, when on the point of resigning his commission for the purpose of entering the Order of St. Dominic. A brief memoir of his singularly holy life was published after his death.

" I pray and hope," she says to the first, " that our dear Lord will make you one of *His own* soldiers, that you may fight and conquer for Him who will be your everlasting reward. This requires courage, but it brings peace and rest when the battle is over. We will not forget you, whatever it may be the will of God that you may do ; but I hope and pray that you may wear the uniform of the King of heaven." When she heard of his determination to leave the army and enter religion, she wrote him a long letter of congratulation. " I do rejoice with all my heart that you will become a true soldier of Jesus Christ, and I pray that God may give you strength to fulfil your holy vocation. He has been leading you by the interior motions of His grace, and has made you feel a sweet attraction to His service. Now be courageous, and do not fear if He withdraws all sensible consolation, and leaves you to feel only dryness and discouragement. Do not fear ; to prove our love for Christ we must suffer with Christ. You will have many things to suffer in your novitiate, but if you keep your end in view—that is, to live, to love, and to serve God only—all will be easy."

In the other letter alluded to, after a sort of apology for her own want of learning, which, as she expresses it, " does not allow of her having an opinion on intellectual things," she continues as follows :—

" I am glad that the gifts God has given you are employed in His service, and may this continue to the end ; but as the work increases, so does your need of light, help, and grace from above, and a most profound humility is required to keep the soul simple and humble before God and man. The work on which you are engaged needs an entire dependence on God, for it is a great work to handle so many sacred subjects, and to dive into unknown regions of men and things, where even your faith may be staggered. Your great study must be continual prayer, and a deep sense of your own inability to do anything without

the aid of God. It is for Him, and for Him only, that you must study, work, and write: His Glory, His Will, His Church—these must be the ends you have in view. The gifts He has given you return to Him with profit, that so you may be welcomed at the end with 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant,' and may He bless you with every grace you need to do all your works to His greater glory."

CHAPTER XI

WE have reserved to a separate chapter one feature in Mother Margaret's life and character which stands apart from all the rest, and by which the world best knew her, though to the world it was never more than partially revealed—we mean, of course, her spirit of active charity. It sprang from the same source as her munificence towards God, from that instinct of liberality, namely, which manifested itself in her early days of poverty and dependence, no less than when she had the alms of a Community at her disposal. They were twin streams flowing from a common source, and it would be hard to say which poured forth in most abundant fulness. In a former chapter we have ventured to liken the character of her devotion to that of the royal Psalmist, nor do we know where better to turn than to his words, in order to convey a notion of her spirit of liberality. "I, with all my ability, have prepared the expenses for the house of my God. . . . Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory. . . . Thine are riches, and Thine is glory; Thou hast dominion over all. . . . Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to promise Thee all these things? For all things are Thine, and we have given Thee what we received of Thy hand. . . . I know, O God, that Thou provest hearts, and lovest simplicity; wherefore I also, in the simplicity of my heart, have joyfully offered Thee all these things."[1]

1 Paralip. ch. xxix. 2, 11, 12, 14, 17.

These words contain the very key-note of what we might call Mother Margaret's ruling passion—her *love of giving*. With her, generosity almost seemed at times to be the indulgence of a natural instinct. "What a pleasure it is to *give!*" she would say. "I fear I shall have no merit in it; how can people help giving?" But more than this, the passages we have quoted exactly depict the character of her liberality. She habitually regarded all things as God's, and as such to be returned to Him again, either directly, in the service of His sanctuary, or indirectly, in the person of His poor. She never looked on what she disposed of as her own, but dealt with it as with something which the Master of the household had placed in her hands, simply to be dispensed in His service. Of course, this is not said as though claiming such a principle as in any sense peculiarly her own; it is the Christian, the Catholic, and in a very special way, the gospel view, that we are but stewards administering the property of our Lord; but, as we all know, this view becomes easily obscured in practice, and often enough the absolute dominion of God over His own gifts, if not denied, at least slips out of mind. With Mother Margaret this was never the case; the vividness of her faith rendered it impossible to her, for one moment, to forget the unseen presence of the Master of all things in His own household. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," were words ever on her lips; and the habitual realisation of God's dominion over all things inspired her with a fearless confidence that all that was lent to Him would be amply repaid. She often used to say that money was the very least of God's gifts, and invariably acted on the principle that, as a matter of course, He would provide what was to be spent for His glory.[1] It cannot be denied

[1] The biographer of St. Camillus of Lellis, speaking of the boundless liberality of that saint, which was so little restrained by human prudence that he left his Order heavily burdened with debts, goes on to say that "he was of a nature so generous, and even prodigal in liberality, as to

that some of her principles of conduct on this point were amongst those things which are more to be admired than imitated, and belonged to the romance of disinterestedness. Ordinary laws of prudence were often disregarded, and it was difficult, if not impossible, to bring home to her apprehension certain very common principles of practical business, the neglect of which, in the administration of temporal things, would tend to produce grave disorders. It was not very easy to make her understand the difference between principal and interest, or to suggest any other method of investing money than spending it on the church or the poor. She disliked too strict keeping of accounts, and was seriously apprehensive that the money would dwindle if there was too much reckoning. "At all events," she would say, "I shall go on blindly, and trust in God; so don't tell me what we have." Superiors often found it difficult to enforce the most obvious rules of prudence, for when the Community was in actual want, she would often give away the money received in alms to others less necessitous, perhaps, than herself. She felt a bashfulness in receiving pensions for her orphans. "If I could," she would say, "I would keep all the poor children for nothing, and never ask any one for a penny for them: it is

deserve the encomium of the royal Psalmist: "*Dispersit, dedit pauperibus, justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi.*" Cardinal Salviati used often to say of him, "This man was born poor, and has lived in poverty. In his youth he never had any money to spend. Where then has he learnt to be so liberal?" And the words spoken on one occasion by St. Camillus himself to his brethren, remind us so strongly of a hundred similar speeches of Mother Margaret, on the subject of temporals, that we cannot refrain from quoting them here. "Let us not doubt the Providence of God for a moment, only let us attend to our own perfection and the service of the poor, and I promise you we shall experience the assistance of God, and we shall see our Order delivered from all its debts. Remember the words which our most merciful Master spoke to St. Catherine of Siena, 'Catherine, think of Me, and I will think of thee.' So we ought to believe for certain, that if we think of Him and His poor, He will think of us, and not leave us destitute of those temporal things with which He has abundantly provided Turks, Jews, and other enemies of His holy faith."—*Vita di S. Camillo*, book ii, ch. iii.

such a pleasure to give to Almighty God." She often took in entire families of orphans, both boys and girls, free of charge, and her character in this matter was so well known, that applications were continually being made to her to receive cases, which the applicants would hardly have ventured to present in other quarters. "Send them to Mother Margaret," said one gentleman, speaking of some such perplexing case of charity; "she is the refuge of the destitute." In the same way she felt a reluctance to receive payment for any kind of work done in the convent, if it were for the Church. When remonstrated with on one occasion for having offered to make a vestment for £30, and then causing it to be so elaborately embroidered as to be worth more than double the sum, she replied, "I can't help it; I am so ashamed of asking to have money given me. Even when a servant I was just the same. I could not bear doing things for gain, but of course that was pride." Mother Francis Raphael went to her in great trouble one day, under the impression that she had by mistake thrown into the fire a cheque for £50. "Well, child," she replied, "it is not worth being in a way about so much dirt." Generally speaking, her gifts were the widow's mite, given out of her poverty in full confidence in the providence of God. Yet, as in Belgium, when a poor servant, she had been called from her charities "the rich Deba," so it was through life; the *riches* of Mother Margaret were passed from mouth to mouth, often creating grave misapprehensions as to the real circumstances of the Community. People were not always logical enough in their conclusions to perceive that money could hardly at one and the same time be freely spent and plentifully hoarded; and the observations to which their mistake gave rise often caused both pain and embarrassment. Sometimes, however, when such gossip reached Mother Margaret's ears, she would laugh, and say, "Well, they are quite right; there is always plenty of money *up-stairs*."

Indeed, there always seemed a sort of loving rivalry between herself and Almighty God which should be the most generous, and often enough the exact sum expended by her in charity would be repaid the very same day through some unexpected channel. "Oh, the liberality of God!" she writes; "it is truly *ask* and *have;* I have just spent £60, and £50 has been repaid to-day." Feeling herself called on once to offer a kind of apology for some act of generosity, she observed, "It may sound like presumption to say so, but I never give anything without at once receiving something for it, and if I stop doing something for God's glory, the money stops coming in." And the truth of this fact has been attested by several of her Religious.

It was her practical experience of the generosity of Almighty God which made her so constantly reiterate the maxim, "Never be stingy with our Lord: He will never be outdone in generosity; He, the Giver of all things, alone is grateful." She so knew and trusted to the liberality of God, that, like her early friend, the Abbé Carron, her favourite resource when in difficulties was to undertake some fresh work of charity. "She rarely had recourse to begging," writes the Religious who enjoyed her closest confidence; "partly because it was seldom successful, and partly because, as she said, she always seemed to hear a secret reproach from Almighty God, who whispered in her heart, "Have *I* ever failed you?"

"I could not trust in man if I tried," she would say, for this is the way I see it—If God will help you, who can hinder Him? and if He will not, who else can?" On one occasion, a person who had promised a considerable sum to a certain charity, not only refused to pay it, but used the most insulting language. Mother Margaret had always felt an interior conviction that the promised aid would never come, and when the painful scene was over, during the course of which she had herself remained perfectly calm, she sent for the priest, Rev. Father Hyacinth Arden, to

whom the promise had been given, and, stretching out her hand to him, said, " There, Father, is your £200 gone. You will come to my way of thinking, and find out what the promises of creatures are worth." Then addressing her Religious, " Mind," she said, " if ever in time to come you are tempted to count on human help for carrying on a work, you will find *it will all go smash.* It has begun in confidence in God alone, and it must go on so to the end. You will all come to my way of thinking: *In Te Domine, speravi.*"

This dread of trusting in human aid was one of her strongest principles. She had, moreover, a great dislike to some modes of raising money for charitable purposes which are commonly resorted to in the present day—such as fancy bazaars, raffles, and the like. She did not condemn those who made use of such means, and on several occasions of the kind she even contributed largely from the Community work; but she never had recourse to similar expedients in her own case. Still more did she dislike the custom of raising money for religious or charitable purposes by furnishing the people with exciting amusements for that end. " Why do they not rather lead the people to prayer? " she would say: not, of course, that she held public amusements in themselves to be sinful, but she shrank from the thought of drawing profit out of them for sacred purposes, and she was strongly impressed with a sense of the responsibility, lying on all who possess the power, of spiritualising a nation so sunk in sensuality as our own. And this feeling led her to regret anything which has a tendency to foster rather than diminish that restless thirst for excitement which is at this moment the national disease.

As has been already said, her favourite charity was towards orphans. Remembering her own early desolation, her heart flowed out towards them with peculiar tenderness: she would never have them dressed in a way to

stamp them with pauperism, or allow their food to be weighed out and measured to them, but given according to the appetite and requirements of each. Yet, though she did not wish her orphans to be treated as paupers, she always desired that they should be brought up to labour, and not be unfitted for the position they were to fill in after-life. Her strong practical sense was apparent in all her directions on this head. "Be sure," she writes, "to look to the cleanliness of the place; to see persons speaking fine and looking dirty is something dreadful." And again: "The best education you can give these children is to make them clean, orderly, and industrious." She showed them a mother's tenderness, yet for serious faults she would have them severely corrected. Yet, at the time when she was herself in charge of children, whenever she imposed a punishment on any of them, she made it a rule to perform some penance herself, which might be an equivalent. "It is because I was an orphan myself, and ill-treated," she said, "that I always made myself suffer something when obliged to punish a child."

The number of those whom she rescued from destitution and raised to respectability was very considerable, and the records of these charities are not without beauties of their own. Two of the Religious, returning one day from visiting the sick, reported that there was an orphan child in the town without a home, living on the charity of the neighbours, now in one house and now in another, and sometimes sleeping in the street. "And did you know that, and leave the child there?" said Mother Margaret, with flashing eyes; "go out again, this moment, and bring the child to my room." Her orders were gladly enough obeyed, and we well remember her look as the motherless child was brought to her. She found a home for her in the hospital, where the little orphan was known by the sobriquet of "Polly Providence." This dear child afterwards died of decline, prattling, a little before her death, of the

beautiful white Lady who stood beside her bed. Two of the five orphan boys, spoken of in a previous chapter as forming the foundation of St. Vincent's Orphanage, likewise died of decline in early childhood. One of them seemed, like Polly, to have been specially marked out as the child of grace, and his remarkable beauty was but an image of the far greater beauty of his soul. At four years old he was possessed with one idea—the love of God. He would search through his reading-lessons of three letters for the name of God, and would kiss it with a kind of rapture. He received confirmation before he died (being too young to make his First Communion,) and the Religious who was preparing him for that Sacrament, having explained that persons take a new name in confirmation, which is usually the name of some saint to whom they feel a particular devotion, "Then let me take the name of *God*," he said, "for there is nobody I love like Him."

Our limits forbid our adding more on this subject, or saying all that might be said of Mother Margaret's charity to orphans; but we must add that it was a charity that partly met with its reward in the affection of those on whom it was bestowed. "Oh, what a tender Mother she has been to me, and to hundreds of others!" wrote one who had been reared from infancy under her care, and who heard of her death on board a Queen's ship at Plymouth; and the sorrow and devotion of her orphan boys at Stone was evinced after her funeral in a touching manner. They contrived to purchase some choice flowers, and requested to be allowed to lay them, with their own hands, upon her grave. When the flowers were afterwards removed by the sacristan, a letter was found concealed among them, which, as the genuine expression of children's love to a good Mother, shall be here transcribed :—

"DEAREST AND REVEREND MOTHER,—It is almost impossible to express our gratitude to you, but will you

accept the flowers we lay upon your grave? though we well know the far better flowers that now form your heavenly wreath. Dear Mother, to the honour of God we will also beg Father Austin to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you.—Your grateful and loving children,

THE ORPHAN BOYS."

The foundation of the hospital at Stone has already been spoken of; it was the first charity to which Mother Margaret had longed to devote herself, but its actual completion she never lived to see. The patients she received had to be lodged either in hired houses, or in whatever premises could be found for them on the convent ground, and although she often formed her plans for the erection of a suitable building to receive these cherished objects of her benevolence, the means for doing this were never at her command.

The want of proper hospital buildings, however, was not allowed to be an obstacle to her receiving patients, and at the time of her death their number exceeded forty. The total number who had been entertained by the Community from the year 1856 to 1868 was 107.[1] The public house, which was converted into their temporary asylum, was made to work marvels; and often, when full to overflowing, singular contrivances were resorted to in order to enable it to receive yet another guest. On these occasions stiff arguments would sometimes be held between Mother Margaret and the mistress of the hospital, when the former gave warning that a new inmate was on the road to Stone, and the latter declared that there was no bed to give her. Once only was Mother Margaret ever known to be worsted in these debates: it was proved past contradiction that no

[1] The smallness of the number will be understood when it is remembered that the hospital being for incurables, the larger proportion of those received remain under the care of the Religious for years, many until their death. One of those who died in the hospital had been an inmate of the convent sixteen years.

available corner remained unfilled, and she was forced to succumb ; but, rubbing her forehead in a perplexed way, " I wish," she said, " we could build a big place and take in everybody ! "

The inmates of St. Mary's Hospital were always made to know Mother Margaret's sunniest side. She reserved for them her heartiest and most cheering words, and her brightest smiles. If anything arose to try the patience of those in charge, it was hopeless to appeal to her for any help that involved the necessity of a reproof ; she never appeared in the wards except as a gleam of sunshine to the inmates. The thought of their comfort and happiness occupied her even at a distance, and in her letters we find her sending them her Christmas gifts, and reminding her Religious " to make the dear invalids happy." From time to time she contrived to give them little feasts and holidays. " We have had two great *fêtes* in the meadows," she writes to a friend, " one for the hospital and one for the schools. The hospital one would have pleased you. They were carried there in the cart, and the tea-boilers went in a wheelbarrow. We were all *primitive Christians*, and went to the fields without cloak or bonnet." In the August of the year 1867, only a month or two before she was laid prostrate by her last illness, she took the opportunity of the holidays to give her hospital patients a grand entertainment in the garden of the young ladies' school. In spite of her extreme weakness, and the bodily sufferings which were then gaining fast upon her, she devoted herself to their amusement during the whole afternoon, saying, when it was over, " I am as tired as a dog, but it has been a happy day," No one understood as she did the art of making such holidays " happy days." She could *entertain* as gracefully as she could *give*, and showed the same tact and knowledge of those with whom she was dealing. On the occasion just named, a poor girl subject to epileptic fits had been placed, by way of precaution, at a table apart,

lest a sudden seizure might attack her, and disturb the others. She was looking rather lonely and disconsolate when she was perceived by Mother Margaret, who immediately went up to her, saying, "What! sitting at a table by yourself? How grand! That is just what they give the Pope!" The child's face brightened at once, and she found courage to ask Mother Margaret to share the supposed magnificence.

In several of her letters a reference is made to one poor person who was received to die under the convent roof, and who is spoken of under his Stone *sobriquet* of "Tommy Trot," though his real name was Michael Carroll. He was a rag and bone man, the poorest of the poor, as his appearance testified, but a devout and practical Catholic. No morning ever saw him absent from Mass, and no week ever passed without his approaching the Sacraments. Poor as he was, he had laid himself under an obligation to give a *daily* alms, and every morning Tommy Trot's penny might be heard after Mass falling into the alms-box. At last he caught the fever, and finding in consequence no one willing to give him a lodging in their houses, he was about to be sent to the union when the priest, distressed that one whose life had been so edifying should be deprived of comfort in his last hours, put the case before Mother Margaret, in the hopes that room might be found for him in the hospital. This, however, proved impossible—ordered thus perhaps by that tender Providence which had purposed to shed peculiar honour and consolation on the dying bed of this poor beggar. The only resource left was to take him into the guest apartments of "Job's," and a little room, occasionally occupied by stranger priests, was accordingly prepared for his reception. The Religious nursed him for the few days that he survived, and the priests themselves took it by turns to watch beside his bed at night. God was sensibly

rewarding all his sacrifices and all his fidelity, and made his dying room a paradise. " Is this heaven ? Oh, surely this is heaven ! " he said, again and again, as he looked at his good bed, and comfortable chamber, and what, in the eyes of his Irish faith, were the angelic beings who surrounded him. It was a scene that must have touched any heart, and it filled Mother Margaret's to overflowing. It was a living proof of her favourite maxim that " God is not to be out-done in generosity." In no fewer than five of her letters she pours out her delight and her praise of God's ineffable goodness. " Tommy Trot is with us," she writes ; " the priests and the Sisters are nursing him ! Oh, how good is God to those who love Him. He is truly a *grateful* Lover."

How many too have been the happy deaths which have taken place within our hospital walls ! How many souls have come there to be prepared for heaven ! If ever a visible and sensible blessing has rested on any work, it has on this ; large in the sacrifices it has demanded, but far larger in its rewards. One soul we may surely single out to bestow on it a passing tribute of affectionate respect ; the first whom Mother Margaret received under her roof at Bristol, associated with the Religious for years in many a charitable labour among the sick and dying, and privileged to wear the white scapular of a Dominican Tertiary. Those who assisted at the death-bed of " Sister Monica " witnessed scenes of faith, of compunction, and of pious reverence they can never forget ; night after night she too told them of the " white angels " who stood beside her bed ; and when at last she died she left behind her such a beloved memory that they could not consent to let her remains lie in a strange cemetery, but laid her to rest under a grassy plot by the walls of St. Ann's Chapel.

Mother Margaret's benevolence flowed out in other channels besides those we have named. One severe winter she observed a canal boat fast bound up by the

frost, and something prompted her to pray earnestly for the poor people who might be there. That night two rough-looking girls presented themselves at the convent, and asked to see the Sisters. They were found totally ignorant of religion, and received instruction. When questioned what had put into their heads the idea of coming to the convent, they replied that they did not know, but " something seemed to draw them." Some years later a great many boats were frozen up for several weeks, and the people on board were reduced to great distress. Mother Margaret entertained them with her usual liberality. A general invitation was given to all the children of the boats to come to school, with the promise of food and fire for the day ; whilst the elders came in also for their portion, and twice a day were served with food in the convent porch. On this occasion, also, Christian instruction was given for the first time to many who, until then, had been living in a nominally Christian land as simple Pagans. One of the boys so instructed had never heard of our Divine Lord, and was filled with astonishment when first he listened to the story of His birth in a stable. He repeated the tale to a younger brother, and complained of his incredulity, saying, " He wadna believe me when I told him ! " But when he heard the history of the Passion, and of our Lord's death on the Cross, his feelings broke out in language like that of the royal Clovis under similar circumstances : " If I had been there they should na ha' done it."

In general,however, Mother Margaret preferred supporting the charities which were administered within her own convents to indiscriminate alms-giving out of doors. Indeed, a little address was sometimes required in presenting a case for consideration. Often enough the applicant received a rebuff at first, and had to thaw our Mother's good-will by a course of judicious diplomacy. But on such occasions it was amusing to see the struggle between

prudence and compassion, and the gradual steps by which the latter feeling was made at last to triumph. A Religious, who at that time had the charge of some external charities, was interested in two poor persons whom it was desirable to get married, but who were too poor to pay the registrar's fee of five shillings. She took the case to our Mother, and received only a sharp reprimand for meddling with such affairs. With great difficulty she extracted permission to beg the required sum of a charitable friend, and having succeeded in her quest, ventured, on next meeting our Mother, silently to exhibit her two half-crowns. Mother Margaret, however, thought fit to behold them with an air of grave disapprobation, but next morning, sending for the Religious, she addressed her something as follows : " Have you married those people yet ? Not till to-morrow ? I suppose they have not got a ring ? There is one that will do. And has she got a good dress ? Nothing but rags, do you say ? That is not proper respect to the Sacrament. I have got something up-stairs that will do ; you can have it for her. And I suppose they must have their breakfast here. There, off with you, and none of your thanks ; and mind, child, you never make up any more matches."

More, perhaps, than even for the poor did she compassionate those in a better class whose circumstances rendered it difficult for them to keep their position in society ; and the assistance which she secretly afforded to such as these formed one of her favourite charities. It was always dispensed with a delicacy which doubly enhanced the value of what she gave. Not having the means at her own command for purposes of this sort, she would apply to those few best friends of whose generous instincts she was as sure as her own, entreating them to come to her help, and enable her to relieve a case of distress ; but adding that they must never inquire for whom she begged. In one such instance the sum of money—a considerable one—was given her by a Protestant gentleman. May that princely act of

liberality, unknown to man, stand before God on his behalf!

It was not always those who had the greatest claims on her kindness who were chosen to receive it. On the contrary, instances are well known in the Community in which the precise *motive* of Mother Margaret's liberality is known to have been the fact that the persons assisted had not always been friendly to herself. One instance occurs to our memory of a person who, by his acts and language, had inflicted pain and grave injury on the Community, and the unhappy termination of whose career Mother Margaret had long foreseen and predicted. Yet, when the crisis came at last, all was forgotten save the desire to shield this soul from ruin and disgrace, and the hospitality of her convent was offered to him when he found himself abandoned by every other friend. One of her Religious, who knew better than any other the workings of Mother Margaret's heart, and the manifold ways in which the fountain of her charity poured out its ever-flowing waters, has declared that this boundless benevolence towards good and bad, friends and enemies, the grateful and the ungrateful, the known and the unknown, always seemed in her eyes a sort of image of the goodness of God, sending His rain upon the just and the unjust. Like Him, too, she did not always receive the deserved requital of her goodness; but, keenly as she felt such instances of ingratitude, they never damped her ardour or made her less disposed to give. And even yet more remarkable than her alms-deeds was her delicate perception of the feelings of others, and her generous desire to gratify them. A young priest, brother to one of the religious, being about to say his first Mass in the church at Stone, Mother Margaret's first thought was to send for his mother at her own expense, that she also might have the happiness of being present. No one can describe her radiant happiness on occasions like these, or the delight with which, after the Mass was over, she stood beholding

the little group—the young priest seated between his mother and sister—whilst she gave the Religious leave to kiss her brother's consecrated hand. She shared her children's joys, and she more than shared their sorrows, for her trouble when they were in trouble often surpassed their own. She ever prayed that God would give her the tenderness of a true mother towards all her children, and He certainly granted her prayer. On two occasions, when a surgical operation was necessary, her feeling for the sufferers amounted to anguish. The last of these caused her such intense distress as to shake her whole frame. She was unable to stay in the room by the patient, though she reproached herself for this as for a weakness, but remained all the time in the choir, kneeling, with her face buried in her hands, her sighs and sobs being distinctly audible. Nor must it be forgotten, that, with all her detachment, the death of any of her children elicited a motherly burst of grief. As one expressed it, " She could not bear any of us to die." She did not suppress the feeling of nature on these occasions, but suffered her tears to flow freely and unrestrained.

But her hundred children did not suffice to fill that immense heart ; she found a place there for all their families, and never forgot anyone. The servants employed in her convents were also special objects of her care and solicitude, and when lying on her death-bed, she would ask after them and give charges concerning each. It was a precept she laid on her Religious, that those who had faithfully served the Community should never be lost sight of, or neglected in old age and sickness, but have a home for life in the convent. They were also to have their holidays and little pleasures, for, she would say, " we all like to be remembered."

More than one youth was educated at her expense, and fitted for the priesthood, or forwarded in other respectable ways of life. After her death a letter of condolence reached

the Community, the writer being then attached to the army in India, in which he bewails the loss of "that beloved Mother whom," he says, "I shall ever regard as the dearest and best of friends."

But what was her charity for the temporal relief of her neighbour compared to her zeal for their souls? It consumed her like a fire. "I go up and down the cloisters," she once said, "saying, Lord, what can I do to save souls?" She writes from Walthamstow, "Forget yourselves, my dear Sisters, and think only of God's interests. *Souls*, *souls*, *souls*, let that be your one prayer day and night. Prayer alone will do it. Aim at the perfection of your state by prayer, humility, and penance, and God will hear our sighs and give us what we ask." In comparison with what she longed to do for this great end, all that she had effected seemed in her eyes as nothing. "Whenever I enter the choir," she said, "it seems to me as if our Lord reproached me for having done nothing yet." Expressions of this sort recur continually in her letters. "I know," she writes, when beginning one of her foundations, "that I shall have to suffer for it, and all the feelings of fear, doubt, and anxiety that will follow. But the last six or eight months there has been one constant interior push—a voice urging me to do more for God, and saying that we were doing nothing." "I am ashamed of myself," she says, "in reading of all that the Little Sisters of the Poor have done. I know their vocation is different from ours, and for their work I have not the attraction. It is the souls of the children and the young; in fact, *the soul* in every state." All that she did in the adornment of the church was directed to the same end. "I hope not one stone is laid on another here," she wrote, whilst St. Dominic's Church was approaching completion, "to please any man, but for the sole purpose of saving souls." "My head wants rest," she wrote at another time; "but never will it get rest in this world till every soul is saved for whom our Divine Lord

gave His Blood." And another time she expresses her wish that she could turn all her Religious into Friars Preachers, and send them through the world like so many St. Vincent Ferrers. Strong expressions of this sort sometimes led to the very false impression that she sought to usurp the functions of the priesthood, and that she imagined the active work of her Communities could supply for the want of priestly ministrations. But in point of fact, lofty as were her desires, she sought to carry them out by the very humblest means. If from time to time she reminded her Religious that "they were called to the apostolate as far as any women could be," she never failed to let them know that the only scene of their apostolic labours lay in the hospital or the poor school.[1] Some kinds of active work she deliberately refused to undertake, such as the charge of reformatories, believing that the vocation of her children was rather to preserve the innocent than to rescue the fallen. And she declined taking part in other undertakings which, had publicity and a great name been her object, would certainly have offered better opportunities for attaining it than the very unpretending labours in which she preferred that her children should be engaged.

[1] A statement appeared in one of the Catholic papers of the time to the effect that some of Mother Margaret's nuns had been preaching a mission at Newcastle-under-Lyme. So preposterous an idea may seem to require no contradiction, yet by some it was doubtless believed. The facts which furnished the materials for the story were, however, very simple. The Bishop having announced his intention of giving confirmation at Newcastle, a vast number of persons presented themselves as candidates, many of whom were found quite destitute of the necessary instruction. The Rev. Mr. Massam, then priest at Newcastle, applied to Mother Margaret to send two of her religious to assist in preparing the candidates, and this was accordingly done. They remained there about three weeks, during which time many amusing scenes certainly took place, but the reader may be assured that the labours of the Sisters were confined to giving instruction in the catechism, and teaching the people their prayers. A year or two later they likewise spent some weeks in Longton, where no religious were at that time residing, to assist in preparing a very large class of first communicants; and these were the only two occasions when the active work of the Religious ever extended beyond their own immediate district.

When application was made to her to send some of her Religious to assist in nursing the wounded soldiers in the Crimea, she was prepared to do so had superiors required it, but it would have been with a certain reluctance, and she gladly concurred in the decision that such a step was undesirable in the existing state of her Congregation. The number of proposals for undertaking new foundations and the management of charitable institutions which she declined far surpassed those which she accepted. Thus the St. Elizabeth's Hospital, then in Great Ormond Street, was first designed to be placed under her care ; a Hospice for pilgrims at Holywell was likewise offered to her ; and she was pressed to send filiations not only to a vast number of places in England, but also to Ireland, Italy, California, and Australia. Her *career*, in fact, might have been far more *brilliant*, and the position of her Congregation a great deal more important in the eyes of the world than it ever really was ; but so far was this from appearing to her a desirable thing for Religious, that it formed one of her objections to placing her schools under Government inspection. She dreaded lest the excitement of examinations and competitions, the publicity of reports, and the necessary intercourse with strangers might excite, in those subject to such influences, secret feelings of vanity, emulation, and ambition ; lest anything of the religious spirit should be lost ; and lest the purity of intention, which alone gives any value to religious work, should gradually become tarnished. " Let us die in our simplicity," she would say ; " the world knows nothing about us, and if I could have my way it should know even less than it does." So jealous was she on this head, that she would have liked the whole work of the Community to have been carried on, if possible, within the inclosure walls. It was not without a struggle that she permitted her convents to be named among others in the Catholic Directory. " I wish," she would say, " that we were all buried at the bottom of the coal-pits."

This, in fact, is the true religious instinct, which, in whatever form it appears, gravitates to obscurity, as the stone to its centre. And though the visiting of the sick and poor, at their own houses, was always included among the duties discharged by her Religious, yet she attached far less importance to this work of charity than she did to their labours in the poor school. In the year 1863 a proposal was received for the Community to take charge of a training school for mistresses. Considering the hard things that had been said in former years of Mother Margaret's "ignorance," and her opposition to enlightened education, the fact that she should receive such an offer was sufficiently remarkable, and filled her with consolation. "I walk on the clouds to-day," she said, "and can only go about saying, O wonderful God! How good He is to hear our prayer! The last time I was at N—— I was in anguish about the children, to see the multitudes that are lost, and the apathy there is about them. I could only go before God and say, 'Give me the children, give me the children,' though I am sure I did not know where to put them. I told the Prioress to take every child that was offered, whether she had room or not, and now see, we shall have all the children in England in our hands." Another time she said, speaking of the same subject, "You know that my heart's blood is to save souls. And now I feel as if we should save all England; for if you save the children, England will be saved."

The scheme, however, which had raised these ardent hopes was never carried out, for the proposed training school was to be founded in connexion with Government, and on that point Mother Margaret was not to be moved. She regretted the opportunity of usefulness that was thus lost, but her conscientious convictions were too clear and too deep-rooted to be sacrificed. "I have prayed for hours to know the will of God on that point," she said, "for when everyone seemed against me, I thought I must

be obstinate, but the more I prayed the more I felt I could not give in." And whilst re-stating her old objections to receiving Government aid, she could not help expressing her regret that it should ever have been accepted by Catholics. "How great the Catholic body might be," she said, "if they only knew their strength; if all the teaching and active orders, for instance, were but working together, what should we want with Government help? Is it likely that people who, a few years ago, would have hanged and quartered us all, would now be giving us money to make our children good Catholics? It stands to reason they would not; people do not act in that way to their enemies."

It was one of Mother Margaret's principles to secure *first* the objects of her charity, whether children or sick people, and place them where she could, leaving it to time to provide suitable accommodation. The consequence of this was, that the beginnings of all her charitable institutions have been rough in the extreme, and a most admirable exercise of the virtue of *longanimity* to all concerned. Moreover, her ardent desire to gather under her wing all who were in need, made her over-estimate the stretching capacity even of her *gutta percha* walls; perhaps, even to the detriment of health. But, notwithstanding many trials, there were also great advantages in getting a certain small number trained, under difficult circumstances, who were able to give a tone to the after-comers before the institution attained any size; and, in the only instances when she acted otherwise, and made her preparations beforehand, she always remarked that the institutions did not thrive like those that had begun in a garret or a cellar. Nor were these rough beginnings without their beneficial effects on the spirit of those engaged. It tended to foster something of that indifference to personal comfort, that manful disposition to patient perseverance under crosses and discouragements of the gravest kind, which was precisely the "heroic spirit" which we have seen Mother

Margaret desiring for her children. Impossible for those so trained ever to feel dependent on fine buildings, or to be querulous at the want of small luxuries. The pioneers in all these undertakings had to do very hard work, and to put up with every variety of inconvenience ; circumstances like these gave little room for " faddles," and the very difficulties that had to be encountered tended to cherish a spirit of light-hearted self-denial suitable enough to the members of an Order that bears the title of " the Militia of Jesus Christ."

This was at any rate the spirit that Mother Margaret herself always sought to inspire. She was ingenious in her plans for adapting garrets, stables, and cellars to new and unheard-of purposes ; and when she had located her Religious in such uncomfortable premises, she expected them to do their work there cheerfully until such time as Providence should send them something better. " The work," she writes, " will be marked with the cross, of course ; without that it would not be Catholic or Apostolic." " We must build an orphanage here," she says of one of her new foundations ; " the children at present are worse off than the pigs. Twenty here, and more coming. We must take all who come, or they will become little infidels." " Don't lose courage over your cross of a stove. I am glad I am out of the way. God bless you and give you grace to increase in patience during this holy time. You are not yet quite roasted, like St. Lawrence." " I have said prayers enough for you to last you a long time. Do not fidget yourself or others over your invalids. If they die and go to heaven, there will be room for more." " Be careful of all things, especially coals ; you don't know the blessing of coals till you are without them. God bless you, and make you a saint." " I hope you keep well and good. That is the principal thing. May our dear Infant God love and bless you. If you keep faithful to Him, your work will

obtain you a bright place in heaven. If you bear all that happens, and do it all sweetly and gently, all will come easy." " Your work won't kill you," she often said ; " and if it does, what a blessed thing ! We come into religion to die, and not to live." Sometimes these familiar and piquant instructions were worded so as to encourage those to whom they were addressed, by infusing a dignity into their homely labours. Many of her letters are addressed to those engaged in the very arduous duties of the kitchen. " Have courage," she writes ; " and when you are hot and weary, offer it all for the suffering souls in purgatory, or to save some soul ready to perish in mortal sin." And again : " Remember our dear Lord is with you in the kitchen as well as in the choir. He sees and blesses all. Have courage and patience—that is the necessary thing for a cook. Our seraphic Mother St. Catherine will help you. She was cook and maid-of-all-work to her family. You are somewhat higher ; you are cook to the spouses of Jesus Christ ! " And never did she omit to remind those whom she addressed, that no amount of anxiety or hard work, or intercourse with seculars, was ever to be suffered to efface the religious character, either interiorly or exteriorly. " When conversing with seculars," she writes to one much engaged with the external world, " never forget that you are a spouse of Jesus, and that you are to kindle the holy fire of love in the souls of all with whom you converse ; with your eyes, your ears, and your tongue : for remember that the eye of God is never for one moment from you." And again : " Aim at solid perfection ; we are separated from the world to make expiation for our own sins and those of a guilty world. This is not done by lightness and dissipation, but by a penitential life—a life wholly and entirely occupied with God. Begin in earnest, and amend all faults, exterior and interior. Every movement of the body should be attended to—the mouth, the nose, the eyes, the shoulders—for all these things indicate a want of interior mortification.

In vain are we spouses of Jesus, unless we act and think and speak like our Divine Lover ; and in vain do we wear the white habit of our Holy Father, if we are black within with pride, self-love, vanity, rash judgment, or dissipation."

We have endeavoured, in the above pages, to give a general notion of Mother Margaret's views regarding the various active charities on which her children were employed. It will not be out of place if we add some of her words and ideas respecting the education of the higher classes. Her undertaking this work in her Community was, in the first instance, the result less of choice than of circumstances ; but, when once it had been decided on, she had as clear a perception of the spirit in which she wished it to be conducted as she had of the method to be pursued in her hospitals and orphanages. She saw and lamented in the world around her a want of faith. It pierced her to the heart to go out of her convent, and come in contact with the evil signs of the times—self-indulgence in every form, neglect of the precepts of the Church, the spirit of false and dangerous liberalism, the disappearance of feminine reserve and modesty, and the decay of faith. On her return from a visit to one of her distant convents, in which she had seen much of the change which of late years has passed over society, she said sadly, " I never felt so *heart-sick* at the world. No one seems to be happy. There is such an increase of wickedness, of drunkenness, of restlessness ; everyone is on the *qui vive*. There is no repose for the soul." She wrote from Walthamstow during Holy Week, pained to the heart to see Good Friday turned by the world at large into a kind of holiday. " The world," she says, " has become a large madhouse—everyone living in public, all excitement and worldliness." And hard as she knew it to be to stem the spirit of the age, she believed it the duty of all at least to make the attempt, each in his

own sphere of action. It was in this spirit that she accepted for her Religious the education of the higher ranks. "It is the work of God," she writes, "and has crept on us imperceptibly. It is far more for the soul than the intellect; though the intellect, too, must be sanctified in these days, and made to lead to God." And we will add one other page in which she draws a picture, severe indeed, but not too highly coloured, of some of those extravagances which, when they come before the notice of Englishwomen who have been out of the world for fifteen or twenty years, make them blush for their countrywomen of the new generation. "I hope and pray that God may prosper the school, and give health and courage to those who work in it. May He make it a school fit for Christian ladies, without all the excitement of the present day. I hear in some places they let young ladies have cricket matches at school, and other boys' plays. It is revolting to all one's ideas of feminine modesty and gentleness; and most of the ladies here that speak of it condemn it. I am sure it is by bringing up the present generation to find their happiness without excitement, that will lead to the essential good of their souls and bodies. Our very life is destroyed in these days by excitement. I do hope the school will prosper, for it may be the beginning of a great work. These children will carry into the world what they learn at school, and will be preachers and teachers of the truth. The young ladies here walk about with their hands in their pockets, twirling their umbrellas; so that disgust is the predominant feeling in looking at them. Even the gentlemen say, 'We do not want wives of our own sex.' It is a strange state of things."

What has been said will perhaps suffice to give some idea of Mother Margaret's spirit of universal benevolence, and the principles on which she carried out her works of active charity. She often quoted Oliver's words, "If God loves you He will humble you, and whilst He raises the work

He will abase the workman." Her charitable institutions had no pretension about them to be greater or better than those of others. Often enough the want of means and other providential circumstances hindered her from bringing them to completion in her own lifetime, and she could but bequeath to her children the rough outline of her greatest designs. But the outline, however rough, was sketched by the hand of a master: may all those on whom the duty falls of finishing and perfecting it preserve unmarred its noblest features, and hand on to future generations the principles which Mother Margaret left stamped upon all her works—generosity to God and man, self-sacrifice and self-annihilation, the absence of all human views and interests, and the simple and single purpose to accomplish all things for God and for *God alone!*

CHAPTER XII

THE foregoing chapters will have conveyed to the reader some notion of Mother Margaret as a religious and a superioress, and will have made them acquainted with the most salient features of her character. Doubtless, however, with her, as with all souls, there was an inner life, into which the eye of God alone penetrated ; and with her, perhaps, more than with many, this life remained veiled from the inspection even of her most confidential friends.

One pen, and one alone, could be qualified to draw the portraiture of that interior spiritual life which he had helped to guide to perfection, and of whose secrets he had been the depository for six and twenty years—and this, in part, has been done. After Mother Margaret's departure, Bishop Ullathorne, for the consolation of her children, drew up on paper his own personal reminiscences, together with some chapters on her interior life, from both of which precious documents considerable extracts have already been given in the preceding pages. We shall proceed in this place to quote some passages from them of greater extent, which, with a selection from her own spiritual letters, will complete this portion of our subject.

After suggesting the strong resemblance to be found in many points of Mother Margaret's character to that of St. Theresa, his Lordship thus continues : " Few of those who best knew Mother Margaret will be prepared to hear that

the chief characteristic of her spirit was an almost continual interior contemplation of God, to which her unceasing activity was rather a help than a serious interruption. Through long habit this exercise had gained such an ascendancy over her, so drew her from herself and attached her to God, that to reflect back her thought upon her own soul had become to her a toil so hard and painful that she shrank from it with dismay, which obedience only could overcome.

" Not that this luminous soul did not know herself and her defects ; it was the depth of her self-knowledge that made her shrink from self-introspection. She had such a horror of self, and of the fascination which self-love exerts over the intelligence and will, that she fled away with the wings of fear from self to God ; and it was by reflecting on herself in God and not in herself, that she gained the deep experimental knowledge of the darkness, disorder, and nothingness that belongs to self apart from God. . . . Writing to me in the course of a spiritual retreat, she says :—

" ' I know not how to begin about my soul, for I am quite a puzzle to myself. It is so hard for me to make any reference to my interior ; it seems as if my head works more than my heart, and that I get quite stupid over it when I begin to look at myself. I have tried for the last few years to forget self in every shape, both as regards body and soul, and to keep the eye of the mind as much as possible on God in all things, and not refer to self.' And then, after speaking of her dread of self, and her fear of losing God, she adds, ' For all I have said of fear, still I cling to God, as my One and Only Good, and I have but one object in life, to work for Him. I have not the power to confide in any creature. All this seems such inconsistency ; this clinging to God, and having but one end—His work ; whilst still there is not one perfect act to offer to Him ; all seems tainted with my bad, strong nature that can do nothing quietly.'

" This forgetfulness of self, in order to look only to God, had been her habit so far back as I am able to trace her spiritual life . . . of self apart from God she had a perfect horror ; it was the source of all her spiritual sufferings as well as fears. By nature her mind was simple in its operations, and her spirit vehement ; her mental sight was quick and intuitive, and her affections were as rapid as her sight, moving her whole soul with love or indignation, according as the object before her mind made for God or against Him.

" ' God alone '—this was the first of Mother Margaret's principles, both of contemplation and action. ' There is nothing like prayer '—this was the second, and a necessary consequence of the first. ' You cannot truly love God without loving souls '—this was the third principle that completed the circle of her wisdom. But ' God alone '—God as present with the soul, God as there communing with her, God as the soul's centre and spring of virtue, this glorious God, so near her heart, was the One Sovereign object of attraction to her soul, the reason and motive of her inward life and outward conduct. ' From the time I can remember,' she writes on beginning her work in England, ' I have always had the desire to give myself wholly to God.' " And her loyalty to *God alone* is characterised by his Lordship as ' the point which towered supreme above every other in her soul.' " However ready she was," he continues, " to accuse herself of her faults, to deplore them, to humble herself to the dust, she never would allow that she did not love God, and love Him above all things."

In a written manifestation, full of severe self-accusations, written some years before her death, she says : " I hardly know what to say of the interior life ; I never like to put it into words. I seldom lose sight of the presence of God, and all the faults I commit, and the impetuous impulses I have, are all done the same, although I know that God is

present and sees me. I have strong impulses to work for God, and I may say the voice of God in one way is quite clear to me at times. I have no impulses of sensible devotion such as I hear others speak of, but the last few years I feel a more close union with God, so that I long for solitude, and am glad to go to bed at night, or to my cell, to be alone with God. All places and persons are almost indifferent to me, except doing all I can for God's Church or His poor. I say again, I cannot explain myself in writing as many do. I desire to be wholly God's, and seek but one thing—to please Him. With His Divine grace I would not offend Him, even venially, for any good that could come to me, and yet I am sure I must displease Him. For my very nature seems so strange a compound of good and evil that I cannot analyse myself, and often tell our Lord that if I could do for Him what He can do for me, I would love Him with my whole heart, and be perfectly humble."

After speaking of her singular gift of recollection, in a passage we have quoted in a former chapter, his Lordship continues :—

"Aspirative prayer was like the pulsation and rhythm of her spirit, and its subjects were of the most simple and spontaneous character. That 'brief and pure prayer,' which Cassian tells us was the constant exercise of the early ascetics of the desert, was Mother Margaret's exercise at all times, even whilst writing her letters or conversing with others. She had such a power of praying thus internally whilst engaged in external converse, that, if she had a long-winded talker to deal with, she would say the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception during the period without the person being at all conscious of her doing anything except to cordially converse. Once in writing Mother Margaret let fall the following sentence from her pen, which she ever afterwards regretted, as it was one of her dearest wishes to keep her inward gifts a secret from

all the world. The words she wrote were these :— 'Aspirative prayer is to me almost as natural as to breathe, and God is ever soliciting me to closer union with Him.'

". . . Ample and replete with strength as were all Mother Margaret's faculties, one always felt that it was her largeness and purity of *heart* that gave her character its irresistible influence. . . . God made that soul great on purpose to love Him, and the love of God was its sovereign virtue. In that love there was nothing weak, sentimental, or savouring of affectation. Her love was a brave, suffering love, marked all over with the dints and scorings of the Cross of Jesus. She got a Sister to paint for her a representation of our Lord covered with wounds from head to foot, each wound as a tongue of fire, which spoke more to her heart than all books could do. This representation of her suffering Spouse she kept in her last years between the two pages of an old book in which she found the complete expression of what her heart loved and yearned for. These two pages are to be found in an old Benedictine Manual, entitled, 'The Christian Pilgrime in his Spiritual Conflict and Conquest.' The two pages consist of two prayers, and in them Mother Margaret found a complete utterance for her heart."

And with these two prayers, which his Lordship proceeds to quote, we will close our present extracts. The first runs as follows :—

" I come, O my Centre and Sweetness, to seek Thee and sigh after Thee, yet I am content neither to find Thee nor feel Thee, but only to see Thee *by faith*, and to suffer for Thee with *fidelity*. I am satisfied and content that Thou art so good, great, glorious, rich, and happy in Thyself ; and I am confident that Thou, in Thy good time, wilt make me rich in Thy mercy and happy in Thy love, for in this pilgrimage I desire no other happiness than true humility, nor greater riches than naked charity."

The other passage formed for years the prayer of her heart :—" How much, O my God, do I wish to leave all, and lose myself to find Thee, to humble myself to please Thee, and to hate myself to love Thee ! But these hard and high matters I dare scarcely promise ; how, then, and when shall I practise them ? Yet without Thee, O Sacred Humility ! there is no solid centre to rest in, no true sweetness to take gust in. Therefore, O my God ! I come to Thy school to learn this necessary lesson, *Teach me, touch me, wound me, and win me unto Thee !* "

We shall now proceed to give a few of Mother Margaret's spiritual letters, selected from those which she was accustomed to address to her distant Communities, on the greater Feasts of the Church and of the Order, premising that they are but specimens of a correspondence which, if collected, would fill a spacious volume, and that, numerous as are these most beautiful compositions of her pen, she will rarely if ever be found in them to repeat herself. The letters we have chosen shall be arranged in the order of the Feasts.

" *Christmas Day.*

" My very dear Children,—Though absent from your Mother as regards place, you are never absent from me in thought, and many, many blessings do I ask our dear Lord to send you all, and make you truly and really His spouses. I wish you all, my dear children, a very happy feast, and many graces and blessings, at this holy time. I feel sure our dear Lord will do much for you, as you are now planting in these little souls, for the first time, a clearer knowledge of Him and of His Divine infancy. Yes, my dear children, learn yourselves, at this holy time, the lessons our dear Infant God teaches His spouses, whom He has called to a close imitation of Himself, especially in the virtues of His infancy, His humility, His simplicity, and

His tender love for all mankind. Pray for this, aim at this, and you will comfort His sacred infant Heart. Small as it is, it is great enough to weep, to suffer, to plead, and to forgive. Warm your devotion with the thought of His burning love. Love, love, love alone can satisfy this loving God and Man! I wish I could be with you all at each house. Well, my children, as that cannot be, we will all do our best to be never separated in heaven; but work, eat, drink, pray, and do all to obtain this blessed union in the bosom of God.

"May our good God and His sweet Mother bless you all.—Your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

Christmas Day.

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN,—A very happy Christmas to you all, and I hope you will bring joy and happiness to many in ——, for we may truly say, unto them a child is born!—after so many years without the real Presence to have our Lord once more amongst them, and to be born again daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. If Catholics had real faith, they would walk miles to hear Mass; but the more God does for us, the more lazy we are in His service. 'He comes to His own, and His own receive Him not;' but let us, my very dear children, receive Him with open arms and loving hearts; let us warm His tender limbs with our acts of love and true devotion; let humility be one of the principal gifts we ask of Him, for, in this age of pride and luxury, a humble soul must be very near and dear to God. I hope, in time, should God enable us to do it, that Christmas may bring many souls into God's Church at ——. It is a great condescension of our dear Lord to employ us in the same work that He came from heaven to accomplish—the salvation of souls. Let us work for this end, for it must be the most pleasing to

our good God, for He has prepared heaven for His children, and wills that none should be lost or lose their blessed home ; so, if we love God, we must love souls, and work for them too, as our Lord did. It requires sacrifice, and of this He gave one continued example. He lived a life of continual sacrifices, and died a sacrifice of love for souls on the altar of the Cross. This must animate us to work and to suffer. It is all very well to be fine in our words, and speak of the good of saving souls, but this will not save us. We are called to the Apostolate as far as women can be, and this is what our Reverend Master-General impressed on us, and we must work and suffer, pray and love, and do all we can, with our dear hidden Lord to help us, to save souls. Yes, my very dear Sisters, Jesus comes from His home of peace and glory to seek lost man : let us, then, do the same with courage and generosity. He has put the work in your hands by giving you His little ones to teach. Do it then, and do it for Jesus' love and Jesus' grace, and blessing will be your reward.—Your Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,

Of the Mother of God."

"*New Year's Day.*

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN,—Begin the New Year with fervour, and let each day of it bring you nearer to God, by the practice of every virtue. What can we not hope for and obtain from our Infant God on this sacred day, when He so lovingly and generously gives us the first drops of His most Precious Blood ? Do not think of this mark of His excessive love with indifference, nor let this feast of humiliation pass, and you not many degrees more perfect, and more humble of heart, as this infant of eight days old so powerfully teaches you to be. You are the spouses of His blood, and He expects a return in some sort equivalent to the love He has shown you. Let nothing discourage you ; but with diligence, love, and perse

verance put your heart, soul, and will to work for all that can make you more dear to our ever loving Spouse. All this do I wish for you, my most beloved children; and could I do or suffer in any way to make you more pleasing to God, I would, for that is my daily intention in all I say or do—your perfection and union with God. May He bless you all, and wash your precious souls in the bath of Blood of His Blessed Son Jesus. Anoint all your senses with this ointment of salvation and love, and let it never be effaced. May you all be blessed to-day by your Beloved, is the prayer of your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

"*Mid-Lent-Sunday.*

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN,—I must not let *Lætare* Sunday pass without wishing you a happy and holy celebration of the holy season of Passion-tide, and a full share in the merits of the Passion and death of our Divine Lord and Spouse. Yes, my dear Sisters and children, I cannot wish you anything better than a closer union with your Jesus, and a clinging to His Cross. If you aim at this, all things will be alike to you, for you will see Him in all things, and will only seek to please Him and do His holy will. We have much to pray for and much to do, to try and repair the daily and hourly insults offered to God, to His holy Mother, to our holy Church, and to her visible Head. We are living, not in ages of faith, but in an age of infidelity and crime; and we know not if we may not hear of things quite appalling to nature. Let us then be always ready, with our lamps trimmed to meet our Divine Lord. He may come at the first or second watch, we know not; but certain it is He will come, and we know not the day nor the hour, nor where, nor when. Be then always ready to meet your Spouse. I wish you all a happy feast to-morrow, and hope you will enjoy yourselves

as much as you can. The way to enjoy all things is to live only for God ; *to be all for Him*, and He *all for you*, in all places and at all times. If we love God and seek Him only, we find Him and His blessed peace everywhere. To serve God is to reign ; we are then free, holy, and happy ; and if we do not serve Him *everywhere*, we do not serve Him *anywhere*. . . . We have begun our men's hospital with Tommy Trot. He has been very ill, and no one would take care of him in the town. We could not let him go to the workhouse, so we have put him into the little room in the priest's house. See the watchful Providence of God over those who serve Him ! (for it is God who has permitted us to do this.) Here is this poor rag and bone man comfortably lodged ; the ministers of God and the spouses of Jesus attending him ; he is better served than a prince would be, for he is served with love. Even here, how good God is, and how generous to those who truly seek Him ! May He love and bless you all in time and eternity !—Your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

"*Holy Week.*

"MY DEAREST CHILDREN IN JESUS,—As the great week of our Redemption is at hand, I feel more in spirit with you than I can well express, and never do I go before God but I beg Him that this His great, His generous outpouring of His most Precious Blood may be the sanctification of you all. For what will all these great mysteries avail us, if we do not apply them to ourselves, and so imbibe the graces and treasures that flow from the sacred Wounds of our Bleeding Bridegroom ? May we not truly say, 'A Spouse of Blood Thou art to me !' But if Jesus is a Spouse of Blood to us, and for us, let us not cause that blood to flow again by opening the wound of His sacred Side (the Wound of Love, by excellence) by our imperfect

oughts, words, or looks. O dear Sisters, did we see sus hanging on the cross with all His wounds open, and e cold bleak wind[1] blowing into them, our first thoughts ould be, what could we do to comfort Him. Let the me feeling animate them now, and let us comfort, and nsole, and bind up the Wounds of our dear Lord, God, d Spouse, by being, in deed and in truth, perfect reli- ous, by the modesty and recollection of our looks. And the interior be absorbed in God, the whole exterior will ow it. It is not in the downcast eye, for many with eping the eyes down see most ; but it is in keeping the es of the soul close shut to all but God that true recol- ction consists. Try to attain this, and you will bind up e Wounds of Jesus in many ways ; for it is to those who e so closely united to Him that He looks for help, com- rt, and relief in this moment of His Passion, which is re- ewed daily, hourly, and momentarily by a guilty world. lay the Blood of Jesus be poured on you all for your nctification, is the prayer of your devoted Mother in esus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

"*Easter Day.*

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN,—May our dear Lord grant ou all a happy Easter, and a fresh increase of grace to ork for His glory and your own sanctification. It is now ie time to work, and merit the kingdom of heaven ; for no uggard can enter there. We must have our lamps trimmed id burning, or the Bridegroom will not know us, or listen our pleading to be allowed to enter. It must be *works*,

[1] This circumstance of the Passion is suggested, so far as we know, one writer alone. It occurs in the Revelations, or Meditations on e Passion, of Blessed Angela of Foligny, a work which did not then exist the English language, but the Flemish translation of which was one Mother Margaret's early favourites, and formed, no doubt, the urce whence she drew the thought, which was one to which she often ferred.

not *words*, that our good God will reward. Let this day then—the day that the Lord hath made—be a day of joy to you all; for I do believe you have all been trying to do your best, and to make fruitful the blood your God and Spouse has shed for you. No Paschal joy could enter my soul if I did not think and hope this of you all—that you have all kept the beautiful Feasts of the Passion, as spouses of the Passion, and children of our Seraphic Mother, whose whole soul was ever intent on the Blood and suffering of her God. Rejoice, then, my very dear children; and rejoice in God our Saviour, who has on this day given us a sure hope of a glorious resurrection with Him, if we suffer with Him; and we do suffer with Him in spirit when we commemorate His Passion, and partake of His life-giving Sacrament. May God bless you all and make you living models, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify our heavenly Father.—Ever your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

"*Easter*, 1863.

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN,—Many happy Easters to you, with every grace and gift that God can give you if you are faithful. You are never far from me in thought and daily do I ask our dear Lord to bless you. Lent is past; and so flies all time, till we are in our true home in the bosom of God! Oh, happy, blessed thought! to be with God for ever and ever—to be with Him who is our life, our light, our love. The thought of this, my very dear children, ought to cheer and comfort us under every trial and cross. The crosses soon pass, and the glorious resurrection comes that is never to have an end! May we, my beloved children, meet in the one great resurrection, never more to be separated! So prays your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

" *Easter.*

" Many, many happy Easters to you all, my very dear children, and a joyful resurrection with our good and loving God, when we have finished our work here below ! This must give us courage, to think that all that is disagreeable to nature ends with time, if we are faithful in following the footsteps of our Divine Lord. He, our Lord and God, has marked out the road with His bleeding footsteps ; and we must not, cannot expect an easier road to eternal life than that He trod for us. His Cross and bitter Passion were ever before Him ; no repose for His loving, wounded Heart, till He was again united to His heavenly Father : and this was all for us, all to gain our love ! My very dear Sisters, what can we do in return ? what can we do to show our gratitude and love for such unmerited, such disinterested love ? What, I say, but love with ardour, love with a grateful humble heart, love by working and suffering for your one, your only Love ? How it ought to humble us that we cannot love, we cannot work for God's love, we cannot do one good act till He first enables us ! Is it not a wonder that pride can lurk in the heart of man when he is so vile, so feeble, so utterly worthless, and not one good thing is his own ? Let it be the grace we ask at this most holy time, the grace of self-knowledge, to know ourselves, that we may hate ourselves, and know, and love, and serve our good God. May He bless you with every gift and grace you need to make you dear to Him !—Your devoted Mother in Jesus, M. M."

" *Feast of Pentecost.*

" My very dear Children,—May this great day replenish all your souls with holy joy, burning love, profound humility, and a zeal for the salvation of souls that can never be satisfied. Forget your little wants, and think only of the wants of Jesus. And what does He want ? He wants *souls ;* and yours first of all ; pliant, humble,

perfect, loving: and then the souls of your neighbours. Be sensible, my dear children, of the blessings you possess, having so many spiritual blessings, and being taken from this very vain giddy world where the devil is master, at least so far as all his ways are followed and admired, while the rough, strait way of our Crucified Saviour is despised. You, my dear children, can taste the joys, the sweets of the Holy Spirit if you will. He is always ready to bestow His gifts on those who prepare their hearts to receive Him. But He will not enter an immortified soul; we must be self-sacrificed, and must aim at perfect mortification of the senses, the eyes, the ears, the tongue, the thoughts, and, above all, of the affections. For if we do not mortify these we cannot enjoy peace, nor have any true repose of soul. Let us then give ourselves generously to God, and work for the highest perfection. Our Lord is loved by so few, that we who are His spouses, and are separated from the world to be employed in this alone, should be indeed faithful. May we have abundance of the Holy Spirit, and begin with fresh fervour to serve our God so good, so kind, so holy, so beneficent to us, His poor, indigent creatures! I do and will pray that you may be filled with the Spirit of God."

"*On the same Feast.*

"My very dear Children,—May the Holy Spirit fill all your souls on this great day, that nothing of nature may remain. It is a Feast on which we may obtain all that our heart can desire, if we will but ask with humility. '*Come, Holy Ghost!*' What can we wish for more than *the Spirit of God*? For if we have His Spirit we have love, humility, poverty, obedience, chastity. *Come, Holy Ghost!* Come, and with you bring forbearance, docility, kindness, and deference. *Come, oh come, Holy Spirit of God!* and fill our souls with all that can make us dear to Thee, to each other, and to all creatures for the love of Thee. Do,

my very dear Sisters, aim at living according to the Spirit of God. Remember His Divine Spirit is ever with you; you cannot hide yourself from Him whose eye is ever on you to mark what is done for the love of Him.

"We should at this time examine our inspirations, for our inspirations are the whisperings of the Spirit of God; and we are specially culpable when we are deaf to His voice. How often do we hear this little voice, telling us to do, or not to do, this little thing or that, and we heed it not! Yet these neglects will be noted against us in the day of judgment; for God is lavish of His graces to us, and our resistance to grace will be our greatest misery. If the Holy Spirit enters into us He will convince us of sin, of justice, and of judgment—three most especial gifts of God. Make yourselves worthy of these, my dear children, and let the Holy Spirit take such possession of you that you may be as the apostle all on fire with Divine love, and may speak with new tongues, so that all who hear you may be edified."

(For letter on Corpus Christi, see p. 297.)

"*Feast of the Assumption.*

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN,—The glorious Assumption of our Divine Mother Mary is the feast of all of us, so I wish you all a most happy one, and if it is not happy we must look within ourselves to see the obstacle, for where God is there is peace and joy; and if we do not feel this peace it is that something wants removing that takes God's place, for God and sadness,or any other defect, cannot dwell together. As the Introit tells us all to rejoice on this day 'when the angels rejoice and bless the Son of God,' how much more ought we to rejoice and bless God for the unspeakable favour He has done us in making us the children of His Beloved Mother, and that in a more especial manner than He has done to thousands of others!

Do, my dear Sisters, rejoice ; rejoice in God and His most Holy Mother ; rejoice in your Sainted Father and your Seraphic Mother ; rejoice in all your Sainted and Blessed Brothers and Sisters: and above all, rejoice in your own nothingness and abjection, for this of all rejoicings will bring you nearest and make you dearest to His Sacred Heart. And have we not, my dear children, reason to rejoice in having our God within us, and so very, very often exposed for us in the Sacrament of His love ? And who has obtained all this for us ? Mary, our beloved and much loved Mother. Praise her, bless her, love her, confide in her, and you will be light with the light of God, and full of joy and peace. What will be our reward and joy, if, following faithfully her example, we all celebrate together this consoling Feast ! Yes, Mary, our Mother, forgets on this day all her fears, all her dolours. All, all is forgotten in the embraces of her Divine Son Jesus, and the Jubilee with which she is welcomed in heaven, and receives the honours due to her as daughter of the Eternal Father, Mother of the Eternal Son, and Spouse of the Divine Spirit. Let us join in adding to her accidental glory by doing all we can to promote her honour. What a blessing ! *You* adoring, and *we* adoring before the same God-Man,—hidden indeed, to corporal eyes, but vividly present to the eyes of faith. May you be blest, my dear children, by God and His Holy Mother with all you can desire !—Your devoted Mother in Jesus, M. M."

" *Rosary Sunday.*

" My very dear Children,—A very, very happy feast to you all, and many, many graces and blessings during this most holy Octave, in which we commemorate all the mysteries of our redemption. May it be a week of redemption to us, and may we be so redeemed that all our faults and imperfections may be washed away by the redeeming Blood of our Spouse Jesus, and the intercession of our

Divine Mother Mary! What an honour to think and feel that we are really and truly *redeemed souls*, and that our salvation is secure if we are only faithful But faithful we must be, or there will be no heaven for us. God has done all; we must now, whilst we have time, do all we can to make our salvation sure. We cannot obtain heaven at any easy rate, when it cost the God who created us all His sufferings and all His Blood, and His very Life, and this to help us to obtain it. Try, then, and work courageously against all that can impede your way to God. There is no way to Him without fighting and war against nature; but we are sure of the victory if we will but fight. See what helps you have! Every day does God descend to be your food, to give you strength in the combat. Be then faithful, love and practise your Rule, keep silence, curb all interior risings that disturb your peace. Be at peace with God, with your Sisters and with yourselves, and you will shed peace and joy around you; and where you are God will be for He is the God of peace and love. May He bless you, my dear Sisters, with His holy peace and love, till you are safe with your Spouse and God in heaven! May our dearest Mother Mary bless you also during this holy Octave!—Ever your devoted Mother in Jesus, MARGARET,

Of the Mother of God."

"*All Saints' Day.*

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN—I hope you will all reap some great spiritual fruit of this holy time, for if we have the saints for our friends and intercessors, we shall surely find grace and favour with our good, our loving God. This feast must fill us all with a holy joy that we are joined to this blessed society by being children of the Church of God. Let unity and peace be the mark by which these your blessed patrons may know you, for it is this peace of the soul that has brought them to their heavenly home, and will bring you also there too. My very dear children,

cold, hunger, thirst, every sort of suffering, was their portion on earth, and now they are with God and His saints for ever and ever. So will you be by being faithful to your holy state, and trying for the perfection you have pledged yourself to God to try and obtain. It may be hard to nature—the saints felt it hard too ; but they worked against nature, and they had the victory, and now are crowned with glory and honour. Do not look back, but go forward with courage and fervour. God forgives the past, and will bless our weakest endeavours; so that on this great feast we have everything to encourage us. We are sinners, so were the saints ; we are lukewarm, so were the saints ; we have to fight with our corrupt nature, so had the saints ; and we shall be saints too, if we will, for the same grace, the same love of our Divine Lord, the same helps in every way are ready and given to us, if we will but make use of them as the saints did. Be ye faithful, my very dear children, and be faithful unto death, for it is only this fidelity which will obtain for you the crown of life. Be sure all of you are ever present to me, and I make but one petition—that you may be, all of you, pleasing to our good, our loving God. May He bless you with every good, and fill your souls with that heavenly peace that nothing can disturb or take from you !—Ever your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

"*November 9th, Feast of All Saints of the Order.*

"MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN IN JESUS,—May our Divine Lord grant you all to meet in the company of all the saints whom we shall celebrate to-morrow. What a happiness and honour to be related to all those holy men and women, saints of God, who have gone before us, wearing the same habit, saying the same office, performing the same ceremonies, inclinations, and prostrations,and keeping the same Rule ! All these acts have placed them where they are, and

ill place us in their company if we are but faithful. Why, hen, are we so sluggish in the ways of God? Why listen o all the suggestions of our corrupt nature, which always eads downward and stops the gifts and graces of God? Why not, my very dear Sisters, spouses of Jesus, why not rucify this enemy, and look up continually to all those ultitudes who have gone before us, and who are now reap- ng the reward of all their victories? Have courage, and ct as if every day were to be your last. Time is short; ternity for ever and ever in joy or woe; and this all de- ends on ourselves, on our own free will. We can, we may e saints if we will; and God wills that we should be. Why, hen, are we not so? We have all the helps and graces that God can give us; for what more can He give us than His wn beloved Son in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, vhich we receive so very often that, did we correspond, we hould be in a manner deified. How often do we receive he kiss[1] from the lips of Jesus himself, and not long after ve offend Him by a want of obedience, silence, or resigna- ion; or by a cold contempt to His inspirations, listening nly to our own self-will, which will ever be our cross! Begin, my dear children, begin with love and joy to serve o good a God, who has shown so much love for you by he very choice He has made of you to serve Him. God less you all, my very dear children; I think of you con- inually.—Your devoted Mother, MARGARET,

Of the Mother of God."

" *The Immaculate Conception*, 1851.

" MY VERY DEAR CHILDREN,—A very happy feast to ou all, and may our Divine Mother obtain for us some very reat grace at this holy time. What a favour and blessing or us that we are her children in a most special manner! nd we cannot doubt her maternal love and protection

[1] " Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His mouth."—CANT. i. 1.

over us, for she never wearies in helping and aiding us. We may truly always sing, 'May all nations call her blessed.' What has she not done for us in the last sixteen years! No other could or would obtain so much for us from God. Let us, then, be her children in very deed, by acting in all things as this ever-blessed Mother would do. All nations call her Blessed, because she was the most lowly; and how great, and truly great, must lowliness be, since it made our Divine Mother the mother of God! It is so very easy to be great if we will, for humility is truth, and truth is God; so who will not aim, pray, and work, to get this pearl above all price—*humility*? Ask this, my dear, my precious children, ask it continually of God, and you will find a heaven upon earth in the peace of your souls. I feel we are all united before our hidden, loving, wonderful God, praying for each other. He will hear *you*, and He will hear *me*, for a mother's prayers are seldom rejected when she prays for the life of her children; and it is for the life of everlasting rest with our Beloved and His Holy Mother that I ask for you all, my children. May God grant this, that we may all meet to sing His praises for ever and ever!—Your devoted Mother in Jesus, M. M."

"*On the Espousals of St. Catherine.*

"My very dear Sisters and Children in Jesus,—I wish you all a very happy feast and a share in the chaste Espousals of our Seraphic Mother, which were the reward of her ardent love, her profound humility, her zeal for the salvation of souls, and her total annihilation of self. If you will aim at these virtues of hers, not only in word but in deed, you will, like her, be admitted to the pure embraces of your heavenly Spouse. O dear Sisters! what glory can we give to God, what delight to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, what comfort to the sweet, the loving heart of our Divine Mother Mary, if we will but die to ourselves, forget self, and leave all self-seeking to the followers of the world!

Let us frequently make the same choice as did our Seraphic Mother : let us embrace the *thorns*, and leave the *roses*, the conveniences of this world, to its lovers ; but as spouses of the blessed Jesus, who has loved us with an everlasting love, let us cling to what He has so much loved—the Cross, contempt, humiliations, and reproaches. These are the marks by which His faithful followers are known ; these are the marks that have distinguished our Holy Father and Mother ; and by these marks alone shall we be acknowledged as their children. I know this is hard to nature, and not to be obtained by wishing only : we must come to acts. But all is possible to God. He will refuse none of us when asking for these things that will make us truly dear to Him. Beg these favours of Him to-morrow, when you will have Him on the throne of love waiting to grant you all you can ask or desire. We have no excuse, for we have with us, veiled, all that Heaven can give us—our Lord and God in the most Adorable Sacrament. Have courage, then, my very dear children—look not at difficulties, but look to the reward which your Beloved is preparing for you. He himself will be your reward exceeding great. If we have nothing to suffer, what can He reward ? God bless you all, and make you most dear to His loving heart, and pray for me, that I may be all that God desires I should be. —Most truly your devoted Mother, M. M."

" *On the Feast of St. Catherine*, 1857.

" My very dear Sisters in Jesus,—I do hope and pray that this Feast of our Seraphic Mother may be a renovation to us all, and that she will obtain for us, all and each, what we have begged so earnestly during the last nine days—the sanctification of all. Her one only spirit was love, humility, and sacrifice. There is no love where there is no sacrifice ; and her whole life is an example of this. Let us imitate her ; for all can do it. It needs not health nor strength, but it needs the *will*. We are what our

will is, and we are only masters of that ; and none other can will or not will for us. Therefore, our perfection is in our own hands, and we shall be judged accordingly. God from all eternity,chose us to be the daughters of St. Catherine ; and this great grace means that we should copy her, and be her living likenesses on earth. We have more helps than she had ; only we are less generous, less disposed to sacrifice self in every way. We are always thinking and feeling how much, as we fancy, we are doing for our good God, forgetting His daily, hourly blessings to us. Be faithful to grace, be grateful to God, for time is short. We know not the day nor the hour when we may be called to give an account of the gifts and graces we have received, and how we have profited by them. Our Holy and Seraphic Mother will get all you desire if you will but love and be humble. Pray for me also, my dear children ;—it is twenty-two years since I first pledged myself to God, and since He deigned to receive so vile a creature as His spouse; —pray, I say, that, after I have tried to help others, I myself may not become a castaway; for fearful is the account which Superiors will have to give to God if, from their human fear or neglect, anything is deficient in those they have to govern. God bless you all, and make you in deed and truth the daughters of our holy Mother St. Catherine ! —Your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

CHAPTER XIII

1855–1859

THERE is one privilege which the historians and biographers of the Dominican Order are accustomed to claim as, in some sort of way, the special privilege of its members—it is that of a happy death. In this, no doubt, there is a touch of that excusable partiality which every soldier feels for the regiment in which he serves, and from which even spiritual men are not exempt. We call it excusable, because, in point of fact, it is but natural that we should be more familiar with the graces and beauties of our own religious annals than with those of other Orders, and that we should thus fall into the error of supposing them exclusively our own. However that may be, it is certain that a volume of marvellous beauty might be compiled on the deaths of Dominican religious. Nor is it strange that the children of the Rosary, whose spiritual life is in so large a way coloured by that most inspired devotion, should feel the effects of the powerful intercession of Her whom so many countless times they have invoked, *nunc, et in hora mortis nostrae ;* or that the words which have been so often chanted, and which have trembled on the dying lips of so many of our saints, should return, at that last dread hour, perfumed with the promise of a peculiar blessedness—

"Maria Mater gratiæ
Mater misericordiæ,
Tu nos ab hoste protege,
Et hora mortis suscipe."

It is, moreover, in some sense, the special grace of the religious life. They who have renounced all earthly satisfaction must not be deemed mercenaries if they look to the reward. The sacrifices and labours of many years, and all that make up that cross which a religious takes up cheerfully and daily, do but point to the supreme moment when all shall be repaid, and when the departing soul shall hear those sweet and gracious words, the reality of which is so soon to be before her : " May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and cheerful countenance and order thee a place amongst those who are to stand by Him for ever ! "

This grace and crown of a religious life was one which Mother Margaret's children were often privileged to witness among themselves. Of some of these happy deaths we have already briefly spoken. Within a few months after the opening of St. Dominic's Church another name was added to the obituary of the Community, that of Sister Mary Peter Moore. She had received the holy habit of religion scarcely four months, and although in a weak state of health, the fatal termination of her illness had not been expected. But on the morning of the 3rd of January, 1855, so alarming a change declared itself that it was judged proper to administer the last Sacraments, and permit her to make her vows. The earnestness and fervour with which she pronounced them is hard to describe. She expired about midnight, retaining her consciousness to the last, and manifesting such faith and burning love that Mother Margaret, used as she was to assist the dying, declared she had never witnessed a death like this. The peculiar happiness enjoyed in her last moments by this favoured soul was the more remarkable from the fact of her having through life suffered from an extreme fear of death, the result, partly of early education, and partly from her strict sense of the justice of God. But the clouds which had so long hung heavily on her pure and holy soul cleared at the sunset hour, and gave place not merely to peace,

but to ecstasy. Half an hour before her death she called to her side the two friends who had enjoyed her closest confidence, and reminding them of the dereliction and mental anguish which it had pleased God should be her portion for many years, she added in a tone that sank into their hearts like exquisite music, "I wish you both to know that all that is gone now, and that I am dying in perfect peace." "May my death be like hers!" said Mother Margaret; "it was going to God with one's eyes open."

There was one young Sister, herself also at that time a novice, Sister Mary Aquinas Morgan, who assisted Sister Mary Peter through her last illness with the most affectionate solicitude, and who was the next to follow her, and to be laid to rest by her side. If the life of one had been broadly and deeply marked with suffering, that of the other had been as singularly happy. "I cannot think," she said a day or two before her death, "why God has always allowed me to be so happy. When I was a child I used to sit on the grass and wonder if all the world was as happy as I." "And have you never known such a thing as unhappiness?" she was asked. She gave one of her beaming smiles and replied, "I am half-ashamed to say it, but I never have. I am happier now than ever I was. I do believe there never was any one so happy as I." And yet the life which was thus described, viewed in its exterior aspect, had been ordinary enough, and at the moment when these words were uttered she who pronounced them was dying of lingering consumption, and was burnt up by the intense and terrible fever which made her couch literally a bed of fire. The joy and beauty of her life had been all within, and the happiness which rested on her childhood had followed her to the grave. *Exitus matutini et vespere delectabis.*[1] She died on the 19th of November, 1858, during the period of Mother Margaret's absence in Rome.

[1] Ps. lxiv. 9.

It is of this visit to Rome that we now propose to speak, passing over a year or two during which the annals of the Community present few incidents of general interest. Year by year it grew and developed, but its very development rendered it more and more imperative to provide for the future security of an edifice which was rapidly assuming proportions unlooked for in the days of its first foundation. The Papal Rescript obtained in 1851 had not proved sufficiently explicit as to the degree of exemption thereby granted to the Religious from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, and questions had arisen in the diocese of Clifton which manifested the necessity that the powers of the Ecclesiastical Superior should be more exactly defined. Moreover, as the number of convents increased, it became desirable that their union as a Congregation, under one general Superioress, should receive some more authoritative sanction. The Dominican Constitutions for women made no provision for such a form of government; they contemplated each convent as separate and independent; and in cases where Congregations of united convents had been elsewhere established, as in France, it had always been necessary to draw up special laws, analogous to those of the First Order, and to obtain for them the formal approval of the Holy See. Mother Margaret always felt that the strength of her Congregation lay in its perfect unity; and her great object was, therefore, to secure the permanence of this unity, and, at the same time, to preserve the strict connexion of the Congregation with the Dominican Order. To obtain these desired objects it was at last decided, by advice of Bishop Ullathorne, and with the approval of the Master-General,that Mother Margaret should herself proceed to Rome, in order that the whole *status* of the Congregation might be laid before the proper authorities, and a definitive Decree obtained for the settlement of its future government.

This important step was finally determined on in the

autumn of the year 1858, and on the 14th of October, Mother Margaret left Stone, in company with Mother Imelda Poole, and under the escort of the Rev. J. S. Northcote. They proceeded first to Birmingham, and then by way of London to Folkestone, whence they crossed to Boulogne on the Feast of St. Theresa. Passing through Paris, they reached Chalons-sur-Saone on the evening of the 16th, and were there most hospitably entertained in the Convent of Dominican Nuns,(also of the Third Order),who gave a kind and cordial welcome to their English Sisters. On the evening of the 18th they reached Marseilles, and embarked for Civita Vecchia, which they reached, after a stormy and suffering voyage, on the morning of the 20th. Mother Margaret had a truly Belgian terror of the sea, and during the tempestuous night she many a time took leave in spirit of all her children, never expecting to reach dry land again. They slept that night at Civita Vecchia, in an hotel just opposite the Franciscan Church of the Immaculate Conception, in which, the next morning, they heard a Mass of thanksgiving for their safety. The journey from Civita Vecchia to Rome was performed by diligence, and it was on this occasion that Mother Margaret's sympathies were exerted in favour of the lean sheep which she beheld grazing on the barren Campagna, and that ,as before stated, she did her best to supply their necessities by throwing them pieces of bread. At five in the afternoon the great dome of St. Peter's appeared in sight. The miseries of the voyage, the desolation of the Campagna, and the fears and anxiety which naturally weighed on her mind, had not predisposed Mother Margaret to any lively feelings of enthusiasm; yet, as the carriage drove across the beautiful piazza, with its well-known fountains, she owned to her companion, whom a former residence in Rome had rendered familiar with the scene, that she had never seen anything so magnificent. "And yet," writes that Religious, "with her habitual dread of elation, she did not like to see

my joy at the first sight of St. Peter's, and had a half superstitious fear that something would happen to damp it. She often referred to this during her subsequent illness." Their first night was spent at the Hotel of the Minerva, close to the great Dominican Church of Santa Maria *sopra Minerva*. They did not, however, venture to leave their apartments until ten o'clock, when they received a welcome visit from Mme. Rosa, a warm-hearted, devout Tertiary of the Order, to whom they had been recommended, and who assured them that their English travelling costume sufficiently concealed the religious habit to render an appearance in public admissible. Under her escort, therefore, they proceeded to the Church of the Minerva, and Mother Margaret's spirits, which had been before at a very low ebb, quickly revived after she had heard Mass at the tomb of our Holy Mother St. Catherine. The relics of the saint, formerly preserved in the Rosary Chapel, were in the year 1855 translated[1] to the High Altar, where they now lie in a costly shrine of marble and gold. Seven lamps burn continually between the pillars of the tomb, above which lies an ancient wooden effigy of St. Catherine, dressed in the habit of the Order. No wonder that this first Mass at which she assisted in the capital of Christendom, celebrated in the principal church of the Order, and over the tomb of one whose spirit she had in a measure been raised up to revive, should have been full of consolation to Mother Margaret's heart, which began, moreover, to expand to that sense of the magnificent which was innate within her. "Our Mother was delighted with the Minerva," wrote her companion; "only she is like the Queen of Saba after seeing the glory of Solomon, 'there is no more spirit in her,' and she goes about saying

[1] On occasion of this translation the coffer containing the relics was opened, and a considerable portion was sent by the Most Rev. Master-General to our convent of St. Dominic's, Stone. These precious relics were divided into two parts, and deposited in two crystal and silver reliquaries, one of which is preserved at St. Dominic's Convent, and the other at our Convent, Stoke-on-Trent.

he shall never be happy till she has transported some f these churches to England, where they would convert housands."

By the kind exertions of Monsignor Talbot, the three ravellers were able to take up their residence in the alazzo Antonelli, part of which belonged to Madame osa, who resided there with her chaplain, and who gener- usly placed three apartments at their disposal. The ouse had a quasi-religious character, and offered many dvantages which could not have been enjoyed in an ordi- ary lodging. It was situated in the Via del Quirinale, irectly opposite the little Trinitarian Church of St. Car- no, and not far from the Convent of the Perpetual Adora- ion, where, for the first time, Mother Margaret heard the oices of a Roman congregation united in the chant of the itany and *Tantum Ergo*, the effect of which almost over- owered her.

The Most Rev. Master-General was still absent in Naples, nd the first Dominican Father who visited our travellers vas Père Hyacinth Besson, who died in Kurdistan in the ear 1860, whilst discharging the office of Prefect-Apostolic n that country, and whose holy life has since been made nown to the world in the interesting memoirs written by is friend M. Cartier. He had formerly been for several ears prior of Sta. Sabina, the French Novitiate House, but vas now engaged in painting the restored Chapter House f San Sisto. Padre Spada, the Procurator-General of the Order, and Padre Sallua, one of the Fathers of the Inquisi- ion, likewise visited them. Nothing could exceed the indness and cordiality of these two worthy fathers, or the nterest they expressed in the welfare of our congregation. Padre Sallua even conceived a design for establishing a iliation of English Religious at Bologna, and pressed his lan with much earnestness, but Mother Margaret only aughed, and said she was frightened, and wished she were afe back in England. When this was translated to Padre

Sallua he shook his head, and said it was want of faith she must go home through Bologna, and speak about it t a certain father there, who was a real saint, and a "*figli della Madonna.*"

Monsignor Talbot having made an appointment to mee Mother Margaret and her companion at the Vatican, the proceeded thither a day or two after their establishment i the Palazzo Antonelli, and after having transacted thei business, they paid their first visit to St. Peter's, the glor and magnificence of which more than equalled Mothe Margaret's anticipations. Indeed, although her visit t Rome in no way shook her preference for the Gothic styl of art, she always retained a sort of *affection* for St. Peter's and often in the troublous times that ensued after he Roman visit, did she express her anxiety lest any harn should befall it. The following day an English frien drove them to the Basilica of St. Paul's, then fast approach ing completion. The vast size of these buildings, an their costly materials, seemed to give Mother Margaret' soul breathing space, and yet her general impression wa one of disappointment. This partly arose from her having been all her life accustomed to a different style of archi tecture, partly from the activity of her imagination, which when once fairly aroused, was not easily satisfied. She had fancied, as she expressed it, that the streets of Rom would be of marble, and the houses of gold, and she wa not prepared for quite so much disregard to street cleanli ness. Her first letter to her children in England paint her feelings in a characteristic manner :—

"My very dear Children,—It seems seven years since I left Stone, and nothing makes up to me for ou happy convent home. I know it is a great grace and favour to be where the blood of so many martyrs has been shed, and so many saints have lived and died, and where their bodies repose ; still all this does not awaken in me the one only happy thought I have in our convent home

—*Our God with us.* Could I make our churches as beautiful as they are in this Holy City I would gladly do it, to honour our Hidden God, and to increase the love, faith, and devotion of the people ; as it is, we must do our best. I am disappointed ; I expected more than I find here, in many ways. Had I never been out of England, it would have struck me more ; but I certainly like Belgium much better. Cleanliness and holiness do not go together here. Pray much for our affairs to be forwarded. I long to see you all again. I beg God to bless and love you at every holy place I go to, and I ask the saints whose shrines I visit to pray for you all."

The petition of the Congregation, which had been prepared in England, was presented to the Prefect of Propaganda, by the Rev. Mr. Northcote, on the 26th of October. His Eminence received it kindly, and gave every hope of a favourable issue ; but he explained that the course which the affair would have to go through would necessarily be tedious. The Constitutions, as adapted to the use of the English Congregation, had to be submitted to Propaganda, and a formal memorial to be drawn up ; in short, it became apparent that the visit to Rome would be prolonged far beyond the time which had at first been anticipated. Two days later, by appointment of His Eminence, Mother Margaret and her companion had an interview with him at the Propaganda,and were most kindly and graciously received. After this the necessary business was put in hand ; and, pending its completion, and the return of the General from Naples, the travellers occupied themselves in visiting the various holy places of Rome, especially those most interesting to the children of St. Dominic and St. Catherine. Through the kindness of Padre Sallua, they were promised admission within the inclosure of the two convents of DominicanNuns,that of San Domenico e Sisto, whose inmates are lineally descended from the Community founded in Rome by St. Dominic himself ; and that of Santa Caterina

da Siena, in like manner descended from the first Companions of St. Catherine, who were formed, after her death, into a regular religious Community. On their first visit to these convents they were only introduced to the nuns through the grate. The *grate* at Santa Caterina, however, was less formidable than in most Roman convents. "We sat at a large open door," writes one of the travellers; "the nuns inside and we outside, with nothing between us." At the Convent of Santa Caterina they were interrogated whether they belonged to "Mother Margaret," with whose name the nuns had become familiar in the pages of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, and great was their delight in being informed that she stood before them *in propriâ personâ*. In this latter convent they had the happiness of spending the Feast of All Saints of the Order within the inclosure, and were received with most sisterly affection and hospitality. The letter from Rome which describes that visit dwells on the pleasant meeting, the delight of once more saying office in choir, and joining in the chant of the *Salve* and *O Lumen*;—the devotion of the nuns to St. Catherine, and their kind interest in their English Sisters, whose exact whereabouts in England they would have marked out on their map. What a joy it was to see the precious relics preserved here of St. Catherine—her slippers, and her crucifix, in one place blackened by her kisses and her tears! Mother Margaret's ignorance of the language obliged her, on this and similar occasions, to converse through the medium of her companion, who was no stranger to Rome, where she had formerly resided for some time; yet she contrived in some way to communicate with her new friends, and if very hard put to it, would begin to talk Flemish. "If our Mother had many such days as this," continues the writer, "I think she would soon learn Italian; for she begins to understand it, and got on very well with one Sister who contrived to make herself understood better than the rest." An equally hospitable recep-

tion was given them by the Community of San Domenico e Sisto, where they had the happiness of venerating the hand of St. Catherine, and the other precious relics which are there so carefully preserved; and were presented with a Vesperal and Processional—rare treasures in those days, before the reprint of the choral books of the Order.

Another letter describes a visit to the old church of San Sisto, the scene of so many incidents in the life of our holy Father. Whatever may be the interest felt by the ordinary pilgrim in visiting spots hallowed by associations like these, he can little picture to himself the effect which they produce on those who are linked to the saints, not merely by the chain of Christian fellowship, but by the still closer bond of religious filiation. To emotions like these Mother Margaret was keenly alive: she was not particularly struck by the music of the Papal choir,—which she first heard in the Sistine chapel on All Saints' Day, and which, as every one is aware, requires custom to reveal the fulness of its beauty, —but her heart fairly melted when she visited Santa Sabina one Saturday afternoon, and heard the white-robed brethren singing the Litany and *Inviolata* "note for note as we sing it at home," and saw the long train of Fathers and novices walking processionally out of choir. Something of her partiality to her own Order probably mingled in her feeling, when she declared that she liked the *Dominican faces* she had seen in Rome better than those of any other religious Order. The Padre Sindico of Santa Sabina showed great interest in the two English Religious, and regarded their appearance as a sort of miracle. He had all his life prayed much for the conversion of England, and particularly of the Queen, and hailed the presence in Rome of English nuns as a symptom of promise. Taking them to a spot whence they could look into the inclosure and behold the famous orange-tree planted by St. Dominic, he pointed to its new young shoot, which he was pleased to

interpret as a symbol of the English Dominicanesses. Some of Mother Margaret's sentiments on visiting these holy places are too characteristic to omit recording. In her the sublime and the practical were always combined ; and, while she was fully alive to the power of sacred associations, she often could not refrain from lamenting the deserted aspect of some of these sanctuaries, and wishing for means to restore them. At San Sisto especially, she greatly longed to set some English labourers at work to pull up the long lank grass and remove the rubbish ; and to the last she remained wholly insensible to the picturesque aspect of a ruin. Her taste, even in natural scenery, was for the gay and cheerful ; she liked a richly-wooded country, and sometimes shocked artistic sensibilities by her simple wonder what people could find to admire in barren mountains.

Two visits to the Catacomb of Sta. Agnese and San Calisto were among the incidents of their pilgrimage, of which Mother Margaret cherished the most devout remembrance. She visited the latter on the Feast of St. Cecilia, whose body formerly reposed there ; a grand subterranean *festa* being celebrated at her tomb. All the surrounding passages were strewn with box and bay, and the chapel of the Popes was hung with drapery, and lighted with lamps and chandeliers. Another day the letters record a visit to the *Scala Santa*, which the two pilgrims ascended on their knees, for Mother Margaret would not be deterred from accomplishing this act of devotion, although the effort was exceedingly distressing to her ; large callosities having formed on her knees, which rendered the act of kneeling at all times most painful. Her greatest treat, however, consisted in her long visits to St. Peter's. She liked to go there when all was quiet, and spend the morning, saying her prayers, and walking about that noble Basilica, the vastness of which so well corresponded to the greatness of her conceptions. On the Feast of the Dedication they attended

the High Mass, and venerated the great relics exposed on that day, and the sight of the great golden candelabra "made our Mother quite happy." On this occasion they were met by Padre Sallua, who increased their devotion by reminding them of the daily visits paid by St. Catherine to the tomb of the Apostles, and who related how, as St. Thomas once stopped to kiss the foot of St. Peter's statue, a poor cripple, took the opportunity of kissing *his* cappa, and was instantly cured. They were also able to visit the subterranean crypt, hearing Mass and communicating near the tomb of St. Peter. "The oftener we go to St. Peter's," they write, "the better we love it, and we promise ourselves some more quiet hours there before we leave, for there is nothing to compare with it." But the great event of the month of November was their audience with His Holiness Pius IX., who received them with his usual benevolence—Mother Margaret's heart overflowing with joy as she bent to kiss the foot of "the Christ on earth." For what other words could rise to the lips of a daughter of St. Catherine, as for the first time she paid her homage to the Vicar of our Lord? The interview was of course short and ceremonious, but on taking leave Mother Margaret begged for a blessing for her whole Community, which His Holiness gave with all his heart, pronouncing the words "*Benedictio Dei Omnipotentis, Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, descendat super te, and super omnes sorores tuas,*" in that deep, sonorous voice, which rested so ineffaceably in the memory of all who ever heard it.

The memorial, or petition of the Congregation, had meanwhile been drawn up, and through the kind assistance of Father Mulooly, the Prior of the Irish Convent of San Clemente, translated into Italian. But before any answer could be given to this memorial by Propaganda, it had to be transmitted to England, and the opinion of all the English bishops taken regarding it. This of course involved a considerable delay, and, moreover, grave doubts

were entertained as to the final results ; for the main object of the memorial was to petition the Holy See that the houses of the Congregation should be placed in perpetuity, under the government of the Order, and not under that of the Ordinary, and it was well known that this kind of exemption was rarely to be obtained. Mother Margaret, however, did not allow herself to be discouraged. " She seemed so certain of the grant of our petition," writes her companion, " that I could not understand it. If I expressed any doubts, she would say, 'O thou of little faith ! ' But I would reply, that I could not tell whether it were the will of God or not, and sometimes asked her if she had had a *revelation*." Even when letters arrived from friends in England, who seemed to regard the whole business as a failure, Mother Margaret's confidence never gave way. " I have no human motive in this wish," she writes. " I know it will bring its difficulties and its crosses, but this must not make me unfaithful to the Order to which God has deigned to call me, and to the strong impression that has ever urged me to aim at this. Everything has gone so contrary to what I expected, and I feel so sure that Rome will do as it thinks best, that I find the only peace for my soul is to be abandoned to God, and pray and force my will to be ready for all that God wills. All I can do is to pray and trust in God, and our Divine Mother Mary, that, as all hitherto has been done by His Almighty hand, He will not fail to bring it as He wills.... I cannot reason on the subject ; few here would understand me, and when asked what I want, I only say, ' Not to be separated from my Order, and to be a Congregation.' " Prayer, as usual, was her one resource, and on the 10th of November she began a Novena to our holy Mother St. Catherine, every day visiting her tomb at the Minerva, and commending to her intercession the issue of the whole affair. Nor did she pray alone, for, as we find it expressed in the letter of one of the English Fathers, " the whole

province was united in prayer," words which rejoiced Mother Margaret's heart, and elicited from her her customary ejaculation, *In te Domine, speravi!*

Her faith and patience, however, had both to be tried. Week after week passed by, and no answer was received from England; and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, which, on leaving England, they had fondly hoped to have spent under their convent roof, found them still in Rome, with no present prospect of return. A kind and courteous letter was, however, received from His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, exhorting them not to lose heart, and explaining that the delay in collecting the opinions of the English bishops was unavoidable, but that everything had been done which could be done to forward their affairs. The travellers spent the weary time of waiting in visiting holy places, and "praying all the saints in heaven to push things forward." A ray of hope presented itself just before Christmas, when letters from England were received by Mgr. Talbot, which appeared to promise a favourable answer. This circumstance was not of much value in itself, but Mother Margaret felt so thankful for it, that, to express her gratitude, she immediately sent out and hired two *Pifferari*, to pipe a Novena of thanks before the picture of the Madonna at the corner of the street. We may observe that the neglected state of this little shrine caused her great concern, and she made every effort to be permitted to get it cleaned and beautified. It proved, however, to be private property, and all interference was found to be impossible. Nevertheless, Mother Margaret could scarcely bear to see it. She used to say, "The Blessed Virgin seems to look so reproachfully at me for leaving her in such a state." It was wonderful how her spirits kept up; and, in her letters home, she not only contrived to comfort her absent Sisters, but did her best to amuse them. "Here I am, my dear children," she writes, "instead of being where I ought, singing God's praises at

Stone. It is not my fault, I assure you ; for I am a rest-
less, discontented being out of our convent. My good Sis-
ter has all the benefit of my grumbling ; and, as she is so
fond of this holy city, she is continually making apologies
for all she sees. If I see a heap of dirt near some holy
place, or discover a bad smell where it ought not to be
she will look round for some beautiful object to divert my
attention—'What a beautiful sky!' 'Oh, what beautiful
flowers!' and so on. These three Ember days are strict
fasts, and we are not allowed milk, butter, or eggs ; but, to
make it more palatable, they bring you sliced raw potato
and raw cauliflower : but we do very well, and have very
good appetites. It is cold, and we have no fire, and no
place to make one in ; so we go out in the sunshine to
warm our feet. I long to see you all more than I can ex-
press. You will all look so good and so beautiful at our
return that I shall not scold you for a month ; so you see
you will profit by our long stay here."

The dirt in the Roman streets was not the only point of
playful difference between Mother Margaret and her more
enthusiastic Sister, who had not entirely lost an early taste
for the classics, and ventured to look with an eye of interest
on ruined forums and temples of Vesta. But Mother Mar-
garet regarded such objects somewhat in the spirit of St
Gregory—marvelled what any Christian could find to ad-
mire in temples of the heathen gods and goddesses, espe-
cially when they were left, as she expressed, "in such an
untidy state ;" and crowned her Gothic enormities by pre-
ferring the trim walks and shrubberies of Monte Pincio to
all the glories of classic Rome. Her love of neatness, in
fact, predominated even over her love of the beautiful ; and
she never became reconciled to certain habits which are
common enough in a Roman population, but which gene-
rally prove repugnant to English fastidiousness. When
some of her acquaintances proposed her founding a house
of the Order in Italy, she would jestingly reply that th

thing she felt most tempted to found was a confraternity of *scavengers*, the only confraternity of which the Romans still seemed to be in want.

On Christmas Eve the two pilgrims obtained admittance into a little tribune over the choir of St. Peter's, and assisted, from their retired seats, at the Matins and Midnight Mass. The exact ceremonies of the choir, the exquisite pastoral music, and the sight of the little Seminarists—the *Pietrini*, as they are called—communicating at the Midnight Mass, filled them with devotion and delight. A *custode* of St. Peter's, named Mariano Bini, who had formerly been servant at the English College, and in that capacity had received some kindness from Mr. Northcote, proved on this occasion a valuable friend. He devoted himself entirely to their service, and when Matins was over conducted them to a little German church hard by, where Mr. Northcote was able to say his Masses, and the two Religious received Holy Communion; after which Mariano the hospitable took them to his own dwelling, somewhere in the basement of St. Peter's, where breakfast was waiting for them, which they despatched in time to return to the church for the grand function of the Papal Mass. They were admitted into the ladies' tribune, wearing the Belgian hooded cloak over their religious habit, three Sisters of Charity being seated near them. The glorious function need not here be described; even to unbelievers it is probably one of the most magnificent sights that the eye can rest on, while to the children of the Church it is far more than a sight, and seems like a sensible realisation of the unseen things of faith. The emotion which Mother Margaret felt in beholding Almighty God served with so magnificent a worship,—in seeing, as she said, "the greatest man of the earth say Mass,"—was so powerful and absorbing that at the time she was wholly unconscious of fatigue. It was to her the supreme moment of her life, and one to which she often afterwards referred.

" I am afraid of saying what I felt about the Pope," she once remarked, " lest I should scandalise people. I wanted to kneel there and look at him for hours. There was all that was most grand and powerful on earth—the man before whom kings were as nothing ! And when I heard him sing Mass I cannot express what I felt : *it was the God of the earth prostrate in adoration before the God of heaven !* " She wrote to the same effect a few days after Christmas : " I could not put into words what I felt on Christmas Day. It was like one long spiritual dream. We were in St. Peter's almost eleven hours. I really was there and nowhere else, and I took all I loved in England in there with me ; and what with making intentions, and trying to offer you all with the Pope's offering, I exhausted nature too much, and that I think has made me ill ever since. I cannot see the Pope without emotion. He seems so truly to represent God upon earth." In fact, her health was sensibly affected, and during the whole of January she continued seriously ill.

She was thus prevented from assisting at the solemn functions on the Feast of the Epiphany, and was particularly disappointed at missing an opportunity which occurred of receiving Holy Communion from the hands of the Holy Father. Moreover, the Roman *appartamento* afforded but slender provision of comfort for an invalid, and gave some scope for the practical exercise of holy poverty. It likewise brought out many domestic talents on the part of Mother Margaret's companion which till then had lain latent. " Our life in Rome is sometimes amusing enough," she writes. " Our Mother has not been so ill but that she has been highly entertained, as she lay in her bed, to watch me going about and busily performing in turn all the active offices of our small Community. I am infirmarian, portress, guest-mistress, refectorian, laundress, and habit-mistress ; everything, in short, except cook, and that I should have been too if our apartments had

supplied any hole or corner where a fire could be made." She then proceeds to describe a first trial of her skill in cooking, which consisted in the attempt to boil some milk over the lamp. "We thought at first it would have succeeded," she says, "but as I had to hold the milk over the lamp, it soon appeared that my fingers must of necessity be roasted before the milk could be boiled." Her next effort was happier in its results, and not a little gratified was the amateur cook when she succeeded in warming some cold soup over the pot of charcoal which daily visited them in the *stufa* of the *trattore*.

Besides the amusement occasioned by these philosophical experiments, Mother Margaret found ways even in Rome of gratifying her love of hospitality. She had been promised a visit, *en masse*, from the Irish novices of San Clemente, and being unable to entertain them in any other way, she had a large English cake made by an English baker, which she had the satisfaction of dispensing to them, "like a real mother," as one of them said. Christmas visits are rather solemn things in Rome, where it is the custom for everybody to wish everybody a happy feast; and the news of Mother Margaret's illness brought a number of inquiring friends to the Palazzo Antonelli, among whom was the Grand Inquisitor, who visited her as she lay in her sick-bed, and gave her his blessing.

By the beginning of February Mother Margaret was sufficiently recovered to be able to accompany some English friends[1] on a visit to a little Community of Dominican Tertiaries established at Morlupo, a little village about three hours' drive from Rome. Morelupo was famous in the seventh century for the convent founded there by the Venerable Catherine Paluzzi, which was, however,

[1] Mr. and Mrs. Grimshaw, of Errwood Hall, Derbyshire; both of them Tertiaries of the Dominican Order. Their kindness to Mother Margaret during her stay in Rome is not to be expressed, and won them her lasting gratitude.

broken up during the French Revolution, the property sold, and the nuns dispersed. The present Community took its rise in 1854, being composed at first of one or two devout Tertiaries, who undertook the education of the children of the place. They put themselves under religious rule, obtained the protection of the Master-General, and at the time of Mother Margaret's visit, were still struggling with many difficulties that had attended their commencement. Mother Margaret was greatly interested in her visit to this Community. Everything she saw reminded her of her own beginnings at Coventry. The Community at that time reckoned but four members, very poorly lodged and provided for ; but in spite of their small numbers, engaged in all the active works of charity, and conducting a day school of one hundred children. The pleasure of this visit was increased by the presence of his Paternity, the Master-General, who took a lively interest in the heroic little band, and was desirous that their habit should be made exactly conformable to that of the English Dominicanesses, in consequence of which one of the English veils was left at Morlupo to serve as a pattern.

The following week they accompanied the same friends to the Dominican Convent of the Second Order at Marino, in order to be present at a clothing of four of the Religious ; the ceremony being performed by the Master-General himself. This convent was founded about two hundred years ago by a princess of the Colonna family, whose father was Duke of Marino. She was professed at San Domenico e Sisto, but had a devotion to found, in her native place, a convent of strict observance,which continues to preserve the same unrelaxed up to the present day.

The two English Religious being admitted within the inclosure, were conducted to the choir, which was upstairs, at the end of the church facing the altar, and from thence they had an excellent view of the ceremony, which was

one of considerable interest to them, both from its points of resemblance to, and diversity from, that in use among ourselves. The postulants, according to the ordinary Italian custom, entered the church by the public door, being saluted, on their appearance outside their convent, with a discharge of fireworks. They proceeded up the church, each one escorted by a secular lady to act as "godmother," and attended by two "angiolini," or very young children, dressed as angels, with wings fastened to their shoulders. These are indispensable appendages to the ceremony of a "clothing" in Italy, and the *angiolini* are not merely expected to dress, but to walk like angels; that is to say, the gait which is prescribed by time-honoured tradition to these little beings is supposed to suggest to the beholder the idea that they are about to take wing, for they literally move along "on tiptoe for a flight." On returning to their places after receiving Holy Communion, the postulants were greeted by a shower of flowers, which rained down upon them from the dome. The church was crowded with people, most of the women wearing scarlet shawls drawn over their heads, and presenting a picturesque appearance. Padre Sallua preached and sang the Mass, into which the ceremony of clothing was introduced, another discharge of fireworks taking place at the moment of the elevation. The actual ceremony of the clothing was performed in a small room behind the altar, the General and his assistant standing at the grate and blessing the habit through a little window. Before the close of the ceremony two crowns were offered to the newly clothed novices, one of thorns and one of flowers, of which they chose the former, which was however afterwards replaced by the crown of flowers. This latter ceremony probably contained an allusion to the well-known incident in the life of our holy Mother St. Catherine.

After the function was over Mother Margaret and her

companion were summoned to the refectory, and afterwards joined the Community in their work-room, receiving from them the same kind and fraternal welcome that had been given in all the other convents of the Order. In spite of the long fatiguing day, Mother Margaret declared it had done her good rather than harm; and, on returning home, her spirits were further raised by the intelligence that a letter from His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, relative to the affairs of the Congregation, had at last been received at Propaganda. They began to see the end. The letter, containing the replies of the English bishops, proposed certain conditions under which the petition of the Congregation might be granted. These conditions would have to be taken into consideration before submitting the petition to the decision of His Holiness; and as all this implied the necessity of negotiation between the authorities of the Order and Propaganda, and possibly further reference to England, it was decided that the two religious should proceed home without further delay, and that Mr. Northcote, after escorting them back, should return to Rome to act as procurator of their cause. Preparations for their departure were therefore at once begun.

Mother Margaret's habitual terror of the sea had not been diminished by the experience of her first voyage, and, to the dismay of her companions, she declared that nothing should tempt her to try a second. There were some kinds of physical courage to which she was a stranger, nor was she at all ashamed of avowing the fact. How often have her children been amused at the simplicity with which when hearing of the military operations in the Crimea or elsewhere, she would express her commiseration for the soldiers, and heartily hope, poor fellows, that they would all *run away*. And when those who knew her Flemish partialities would rally her on an incident in the Revolution of 1830, when a Dutch regiment is said (we know not with what truth) to have taken refuge in a deep hole in

the royal park, and only to have been displaced by Belgian artillery, she could see nothing to laugh at in the story, but would say, quite in earnest, " Quite right, too ; *why, would you have had them come out to be shot at ?* " Her dread of the sea was also far from British ; and being unacquainted with the route, she was not at all aware of the difficulties which lay in the way of an overland homeward journey. " Her determination," says her companion, " was a source of the greatest anxiety both to Mr. Northcote and myself, for we knew the land route well, and felt assured she would never be able in her weakened state to endure such an undertaking. Even the journey by railway through France alone, though divided at Chalons and Lyons, had been almost more than she could endure, her spine suffered so intensely from the vibration ; how, then, was she ever to bear the extra fatigue of a diligence ? Happily she at last gave up the point, and consented to return by sea ; and, though myself somewhat terrified at the prospect of again embarking on the water, it was a great relief, for I feared we should never have got her home alive."

Before taking leave of the Eternal City they were desirous, if possible, of obtaining the favour of another interview with the Holy Father, in order to receive his parting blessing. Having been so lately presented, a formal audience could not be procured ; but Mgr. Talbot arranged that they should take their places in a hall of the Vatican through which His Holiness had to pass. On his appearance, the two Religious presented themselves for his blessing ; and His Holiness, who was acquainted with the object of their journey to Rome, addressed them some remarks on the subject, which did not sound encouraging as to its likelihood of success. As he spoke in Italian, Mother Margaret was entirely ignorant of the tenor of his words, and knelt, gazing with a smile of delight on the countenance of the Holy Father, unconscious of the misgivings which were making themselves felt in the hearts of her

companions. When they had descended the Scala Regia, and once more found themselves seated in their carriage, Mother Margaret had to hear their report of what had passed, and the doubts which it had suggested; nothing was capable of shaking her composure. "I don't see it as you do," she said; "you will see it will be granted all the same."

They left Rome for Civita Vecchia on the 16th of February. Although the business which was the object of their visit remained undecided, yet it was in a fair way to be settled. The journey therefore had had ample results, for it was plain that without it the affair would never have been even thus far forwarded. "Do not suppose I am uneasy at the result of all this," wrote Mother Margaret on the eve of her homeward journey; "I feel sure God will bring it all right; and it is a consolation to think we have done all we could for the Order, and to put things on a stable footing, which I am sure it will be in time. . . . The more I see of the world the more confidence I feel in God, and the greater desire to be wholly His." In fact, her confidence in the result never wavered. It reminded one of the words of St. Theresa under very similar circumstances: "When all seemed lost," says that saint in the history of her first foundation, "I went to our Lord, and said to Him, 'Lord this house is not mine, it has been established for Thee alone; and since there is no one to conduct the case, be pleased Thyself to undertake it!' Having spoken these words, I felt as perfectly at peace and free from care as if I had the whole world to labour for me; *and I immediately considered the success of our cause to be certain.*"[1]

Mother Margaret's impressions of Rome were of a mixed character. With its externals, as we have seen, she was disappointed. Her taste had been formed in another school, and she could not divest herself of preconceived ideas sufficiently to estimate at its full worth a form of beauty so

[1] "History of the Foundations," chap. v.

totally at variance with them. Nevertheless, she did not fail to admire that *warmth* which is to be found in the Roman churches, the richness of their materials, and, above all, the devotion of the worshippers who throng their courts ; and, after her return to England, she made use of her Roman experience to correct several points of church decoration. She took notes of everything she saw, specially such matters of church ceremonial as she had heard debated in England. But she was naturally only partially sensible to much of that fascination which Rome exerts over those who are fully familiar with its historic associations. She had not the key to all which constitutes the charm of the Christian city, as it stands amid the dead bones of the Pagan empire ; and could only marvel at the deeper enthusiasm of her companion, whose feelings she shocked a little rudely by singing "*In exitu Israel*," as their carriage passed out of the city gates. But if material Rome only partially won her heart, so that she repeated again and again, that " she was in love with nothing but the Pope and St. Peter's," there was another sense in which she rendered it the full tribute of her admiration.

" I have been delighted," she writes, " with seeing the works of the Church, and how sure one is that it is God's Church, and that the Pope and the Cardinals are really God's legislators on earth, and that their one end is God's glory and the soul of man, although we know that in other respects they are but weak, frail men. If I could, I love the Church more and more, and our Order also, for it seems here like a part of the Church herself."

She was wonderfully struck by the tenderness and charity towards individual souls, and especially towards sinners, which is so apparent in Rome, and with which during her visit, she had some special opportunities of becoming acquainted. " They are *too* good, by half," she would say. And often afterwards, when dwelling on this feature of Roman policy, she would compare the great

indulgence shown by the rulers of the Church to the weak and sinful, to the dealings of God, Who exhibits such tenderness to sinners, while His severer discipline appears at times to be reserved for the just.

The voyage to Marseilles proved less formidable than had been expected, and on their way through France the travellers stopped both at Lyons and Chalons. The convent of our Fathers at Lyons was only then in its commencement, but Mother Margaret was delighted with all she saw, and all she heard of its prospects, and did not fail to notice the fact that they were "real Goths." At Boulogne, where they intended to embark for England, they were detained by tempestuous weather. Mother Margaret's dread of the short crossing positively blanched her cheeks all the time of her stay. It was quite piteous to witness her distress. She left it with her companions to decide when she was to go, saying that it was like leading her to execution ; and they agreed that, though the weather was still unfavourable, a rough passage would prove less injurious to her than a prolonged period of such painful suspense. It is possible that the manifestation of such timidity may appear to many pusillanimous, but the fact is worth noticing as illustrating the intensity of all her emotions ; for the sentiment of fear did not exert a greater power over her than those of gratitude, compassion, sorrow, or anger. Her woman's heart was as weak in one way as it was strong in another, and never made profession of any form of masculine heroism.

The dreaded passage was accomplished without disaster of any kind. The thought of returning to her convent, after five months' absence, kept up Mother Margaret's courage ; but the happiness itself was almost overpowering to her, and she could not speak of it in anticipation without shedding tears.

It was on the 14th of March that the travellers reached

Stone, where they were joyfully welcomed by the united Communities of Stone and Stoke. The five months of their absence had been a weary and anxious time to those at home : one Sister, whom they had left in the last stage of consumption, had departed to God, and there had been much sickness and trouble of various kinds ; but all was now forgotten in the happy prospect of reunion.

It had been arranged to give them a solemn reception ; so the carriage which conveyed them from the station, and which was decorated inside with flowers and inscriptions of welcome, drew up, not at the convent, but at the church door within the enclosure, in order that they might pay their visit of thanksgiving to our Lord before meeting the Community. The Religious were all assembled in the choir, and intoned the *Te Deum* as soon as the travellers entered the church. Both of them declared that they had not heard any music half so sweet since they left England as that *Te Deum*, and the Sisters in choir were of opinion that the angels joined with them in singing it. When this was concluded, mother and children met together in the Community-room, and gave free vent to their joy. Mother Margaret's next visit was to Our Lady's chapel in the dormitory, which had been painted and decorated in her absence, and proved a welcome surprise. She had not forgotten her favourite image during her absence, but had obtained from His Holiness, among other privileges, the grant of three hundred days' indulgence for any prayers recited before it, under the title of " Refugium Peccatorum."

So soon as he had safely conducted home his charges, Mr. Northcote returned to Rome,—" a truly heroic act," writes Mother Margaret, recommending him to the prayers of all the Religious. " Two thousand miles is no joke ; *and then to have again to cross that dreadful sea* ! " One thousand *De Profundis* were promised to the Holy Souls to obtain him a prosperous voyage, as indeed he had ; although other vessels, which came from Naples to Civita

Vecchia on the same night, were so terribly tossed that many of the passengers preferred pursuing their journey by land to again encountering the terrors of the sea. Prayers were also ordered to be offered unceasingly for the success of the business with which he was charged. "Let the Litany of the Saints of our Order be recited daily in all the houses," she says; "and let us keep closely united to God by love and humility, and all we desire will be granted."

There is a proverb current in Italy which says, "Beware of the Dominican Litanies," referring to the many graces and deliverances from impending calamities recorded in the history of the Order as having been obtained in answer to those prayers. To the number of these favours Mother Margaret and her children had the happiness of adding the termination of this important business by the grant of their petition in every essential point. On the 26th of May, 1859, being the Feast of St. Philip Neri, in a special audience granted to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda for that purpose, the Pope gave his assent to the proposed arrangement, and ordered that a decree should be drawn up, embodying the substance of the petition, and certain conditions which had been agreed on between the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, on behalf of the English Hierarchy, and the Master-General of the Dominican Order. According to the terms of this decree, the houses of the Religious founded, or hereafter to be founded in England, were formed into a Congregation, having one general Superioress, and one Novitiate house. They were placed immediately under the jurisdiction of the Master-General of the Order, who exercised his authority through a delegate, nominated by himself, his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne, being confirmed in that office for his life. In the original petition, presented on the part of the Congregation, it was proposed to place the convents of the Sisters under the government of the English

Provincial for the time being ; for Mother Margaret's only desire in this matter had been to belong to the Order, and not to be separated from its jurisdiction, and the simplest method of securing this privilege had seemed that of allowing her convents to fall under the ordinary government of the Province. But the Master-General thought it preferable to place the Congregation under the immediate jurisdiction of the Head of the Order, and this alteration was therefore made at his desire.

The good news was received at Stone on the 4th of June, being communicated in a letter from Mr. Northcote, beginning with the words of happy augury, *Deo gratias et Mariæ et S. Philippo Neri !* In thanksgiving for this favour the *Te Deum* was sung on three successive days in all the convents of the Congregation. Mr. Northcote at once set out on his return to England, and on the 11th of June, being Whitsun Eve, he reached Stone, where, on Whit Tuesday he sang the solemn High Mass of thanksgiving.

Mother Margaret's joy at the happy issue of this affair, which secured the unity of her Congregation on a firm and lasting basis, is not easily described. She loved to attribute the success of the negotiations, in part at least, to the intercession of St. Philip Neri, on whose feast the petition had received the assent of his Holiness. " It was settled on St. Philip's day," she writes ; " *the dear old man !* he has paid us well for our prayers." And, indeed, the circumstance was a little remarkable, as St. Philip's feast is a strict holiday in Rome, when business is rarely transacted, save of the most important kind. She hastened also to offer her grateful acknowledgments to his Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, whose favourable support of the petition, and friendly negotiations, had largely contributed to procure its success ; and in his reply he was pleased to express the happiness he felt " in having been conducive

to the stability and prosperity of the Sisters of Penance in England."

It was indeed impossible that those who had watched over the infancy of the institute, and co-operated in its formation, could behold with indifference its expansion to perfect maturity. And his Lordship the Bishop of Birmingham, in replying to a letter of congratulation addressed to him by the Religious on the anniversary of his consecration, a few days after the receipt of the decree from Rome, took occasion to refer to the event in language which we cannot refuse ourselves the pleasure of quoting :—

" I have not yet congratulated you," he says, " on the result of Mother Prioress's mission to Rome, which crowns the work of which you are a part.

" My dear Sisters, you cannot too much appreciate the spiritual honour of being called to be amongst the early members of so noble a work for God's honour, and for the glory of the saints who have gone before you. The work will be what your individual and several sanctities make it —neither more nor less. A holy, humble Sister is a great living stone in the work ; a sapphire, an onyx, or a chrysolite in the foundation. A weak Sister, hanging on her own centre, will be a weak spot in the sacred edifice. But I will not think that there could be one of you unworthy to be a bright and living stone in the beautiful spiritual building which the Spirit of God unites together and dwells in.

" Pure and transparent as crystal should be your hearts ; active as fire, unselfish as the ministering spirits, sweet and tender as grace, strong, generous, and enduring as the hearts of martyrs. For such are all the hearts over which Jesus has obtained the perfect mastery. With hearts like these, exhibiting in their union the spectacle of many and diverse natures and temperaments, subdued under one

spirit, and raised up on high in that spirit, our Lord can do any great work with you that He wills, more fruitfully than we can see or understand; He can project a little heaven of radiant peace into what, without Him, would be a chaos of conflicting elements. Who after that would ask for some other and grosser miracle to prove the presence and presiding grace of His divinity?

"I can wish you no greater blessing than this enduring miracle; and this I pray for you with all my heart, ever remaining your devoted spiritual father,

W. B. ULLATHORNE."

Six months later the Master-General of the Order forwarded to England the diploma by which Mother Margaret was appointed first Prioress Provincial, such being the title which his Paternity had selected for the Superioress-General of the newly-formed Congregation. The following is a translation of the document:—

"To our beloved daughter in Christ, the Reverend Mother Margaret Mary, we, Brother Alexander Vincent Jandel, Professor of Sacred Theology, Master-General and humble servant of the Order of Preachers, salutation.

"Desiring, according to the duty imposed on us by our office, to provide the Nuns of the Congregation[1] of the Conventual Sisters of our Third Order with a suitable Prioress Provincial, who may strenuously labour for the good and increase of the said Province, we have with mature consideration chosen you, Mother Margaret Mary, of whose zeal, prudence, and dexterity, in the management of affairs we have reliable knowledge. Wherefore, by the tenor of these presents, and by the authority of our office, we appoint, give, and place you, Mother Mar-

[1] The Congregation afterwards assumed the title of *The Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena.*

garet Mary, as Prioress Provincial of all the Nuns of the Congregation of Conventual Sisters of our Third Order living in England, until our revocation ; with all faculty, authority, and jurisdiction over the Monasteries and over the above-mentioned Sisters, so far as by the force of our laws it is recognised and can be suitable to the said office. Commanding you in virtue of the Holy Ghost, and of holy obedience, under a formal precept, to take the burden of the said office on your shoulders, and to endeavour to discharge it according to the strength given you by the Lord. Moreover, under the same formal precept, we command all and each of the Nuns of the aforesaid Congregation living conventually,to acknowledge you as their true and legitimate Prioress Provincial, and to obey you in the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

" Given at Rome, from our Convent of the Minerva, this 29th day of December 1859.

BR. A. V. JANDEL, *Mag. Ord.*"

CHAPTER XIV

1859–1867

THE latter years of Mother Margaret's life were occupied by those extensive undertakings at Stone and Stoke which have been spoken of in a previous chapter, as well as by the establishment of new foundations at Leicester, Rhyl, St. Mary Church, and Bromley-St. Leonards, near Bow. Two of these foundations, those namely of Leicester and Rhyl, were afterwards withdrawn ; and the Community later established at Bow, was originally fixed at Walthamstow, in Essex, whence it was removed in the November of 1867.

The arduous business of establishing a new foundation was precisely one of those occasions which brought out some of Mother Margaret's special gifts. Her practical sense, and the genius she possessed for methodical arrangement, were never displayed to greater advantage than when she had to begin a new work in a strange place,—to adapt some secular habitation to the purposes of religious life,—and to set in motion the whole machinery of a Community, to be worked in the first instance by some devoted little band of six or seven members. It was wonderful how few modifications of the ordinary Rule she allowed under these circumstances, and how few were ever required ; how she contrived that all the regular exercises of the Community should go on, in spite of every disadvantage, as steadily as at the mother-house ; and how happily the difficulties and

drawbacks of the situation were wont to call into activity the capabilities and good-will of all concerned.

The choir was always the first thing thought of: the most suitable room in the house was selected for the purpose, and its arrangement was always reserved as Mother Margaret's exclusive share. She contrived to give so devotional a character to these room-chapels that many were found to lament the day when they were exchanged for choirs of greater pretension. As much care and expense was bestowed on the decoration of the altar, and the correct carrying out of every ceremony, as if the Religious were in possession of a church; nor were their slender numbers ever suffered to be a hindrance to the celebration of the greater feasts with all due solemnity. Possibly this circumstance may be judged by some as arguing a want of prudence, and an excess of zeal. It may seem to have been making undue demands on the strength of those engaged; and these extraordinary circumstances may appear to have required extraordinary indulgences and dispensations. Let it then be distinctly understood, that the experience of all those who have taken part in these new foundations has invariably been, that it is precisely the jealous maintenance of religious life in all its details which has supported them in the midst of the unusual fatigues and sacrifices which, at such times, are unavoidable. The choral office has been the refreshment after the labours of the school: the ceremonies of the Rule, and the many obligations of their daily routine, have interposed between them and that atmosphere of secular life which might otherwise have dragged them down to its own level; and many a letter written from the newly-founded colonies might be quoted in proof of the joy and consolation felt by the Religious, at every fresh step taken for bringing their observance closer and more strictly in conformity to that of the mother-house. And in saying this, we have unintentionally touched on a subject which demands more than a pass-

ing word. The English Catholic public has, from time to time, heard much of Mother Margaret and her *work*; but in what did that work really consist? Estimated by its material extent, it was not so very great after all. Other institutes of modern foundation have done far more; have spread more widely and more rapidly; have founded more houses, associated a larger number of members, and organised a far greater number of active charities. She did her part in all these ways; but her real work lay in something higher. It lay in her successful vindication of this great principle: that the strict obligations of religious life are fully compatible with the discharge of active charitable labours. Almost every one of what are called the active Orders of the Church, at least those of modern foundation, have yielded up a certain proportion of this principle. It has become a sort of canon in the popular mind, that teaching bodies must be released both from the recital of the Divine Office and from the observation of anything more than the fasts and abstinences of the Church. It is supposed that the discharge of duties, so exhausting both to the physical and mental strength, as those which are borne in the hospital or the school, demand the surrender of these and other austerities; and that they to whom God has given the vocation of labouring for the good of their neighbour must make the sacrifice as a matter of course. Mother Margaret's entire work, as a religious foundress, was a protest against this theory. Instead of admitting the supposition that active work demands a relaxation of certain religious obligations, she powerfully maintained the opposite principle—that it is such religious obligations themselves which support the work. She held that far from wearing out and overtaxing the powers of the workmen, they husband and refresh those powers; and experience has confirmed the soundness of her views. Every one engaged in teaching, for example, (and we might say the same of other active duties,) is well aware how great a

strain on the mind is produced by incessant application, and how much the overworked mind and body stand in need, at certain intervals, of rest, and a diversion of ideas. Or, again, there is another danger : a Religious may not grow weary of her employment, but, on the other hand, she may become absorbed in it. She may be forming into an excellent schoolmistress, a first-rate hospital nurse, but the interest in her classes, or the bustle and business of her charitable labours, may so have filled up every cranny of her mind, that little room has been left for the exercises of the interior life ; and, wearing the habit, she may, after all, have retained but little of the real character of a *nun*. The more the rules and obligations of religious life are cut down, to meet the supposed necessities of such a case, the more obvious is the danger. You are breaking down the dykes which keep the deep waters of the world from rushing in upon her soul. You are depriving her of the very props and buttresses on which her religious character leans; and, unconsciously, you are, at the same time, injuring the work itself, by cutting off many influences of a higher source, which would flow into it through the channels of recollection and austerity ; thereby rendering the work more or less dependent on human talent and energy, and depriving it of much of the sap and vigour which it would derive from a closer dependence on God. And, lastly, the poor human agent herself is the sufferer : she is plunged in the very thick of duties most wearisome and repugnant to nature, and, at the same time, she is deprived of those very helps which would best enable her to persevere. Life, we all know, is but a dull and wearisome sort of thing ; and the humble part which women take in it is made up of very commonplace duties. In spite of the romance with which the imagination invests conventual life, nuns are no way exempt from the common law. Whatever fine things may be said about the works of mercy,to *nature* there is nothing very soul-inspiring in the daily routine of an orphanage or

a hospital-ward. But there is a nameless sweetness in the real religious atmosphere, which elevates and ennobles all such things,—which transports the soul to the mountain-top even while the body is engaged in the most menial labours, —which throws over daily life, and all its irksome *minutiae*, the beauty and the fragrance of Paradise, because it weaves into them the thought of God,—and which draws out of the very austerities of a religious Rule the strength and heroism which fits us to endure the more ignoble austerities which must be encountered in the poor school or the sick chamber, amid duties which, however attractive on their supernatural side, are repulsive enough to flesh and blood. Nay, more than this, the things which themselves seem to be hindrances, prove on trial to be helps. The wholesome interruptions of mental and manual labour, which are provided for by the calls of the choir, and other Community exercises, prevent any work from becoming exhausting. No doubt they often thwart *nature*, even whilst they protect *health*. He must be a very perfect Religious who can be perpetually checked and interrupted in the midst of an absorbing occupation, and never feel a motion of impatience ; but who has ever been summoned from the school or the work-room, or has suspended an hour of study, or in any other way has denied his impetuosity, whether physical or intellectual, at the summons of obedience, without feeling the benefit to body and soul ? What a secret for the preservation of cheerfulness, of good temper, and a sound mind, lies in the diversion of ideas and change of employment which is thus afforded ! What a blessing to the worn mind and overtaxed spirits, to shut the doors of earth for one brief hour, and to open the windows of heaven! How many a man of business, how many a hard-worked doctor, lawyer, or priest, such as we daily see threatened with premature old age, in consequence of the pressure of excessive work, would save their health and mental vigour, were they subject to some such happy necessity of suspend-

ing their labours,and giving rest to their overstrained faculties ! People talk of the Divine Office being a *burden* to those engaged in active labour ; how little they are aware of its powers to soothe, to invigorate, and to refresh ! Religious women are not the less fitted to resume their active labours, after steeping their souls a while in that inspired atmosphere ; and were it consistent to speak of private and personal experiences, instances might be cited in which the words of the Daily Office have remained in the memory, clothed with such a power and charm as have strengthened the soul in the midst of its petty trials and repugnances, and enabled it to rise to a higher level, and to keep itself throughout a weary day attuned to a spirit of sacrifice.

In the practical vindication of these truths lay Mother Margaret's real work. In a former chapter we have already spoken of the importance she attached to the interior life, and the preference which she ever gave to its practices, over mere exterior work. How often did she remind her Religious that they were not *schoolmistresses*, but *nuns* ; that all spiritual duties must come first ; that the Divine Office was *literally* their office,the real work of a Religious ; that their best way of benefiting their neighbour was by becoming saints themselves ; and that, for one soul gained to God by their words and exhortations, they might save thousands by their prayers. The spiritual edifice which she sought to rear was built up out of principles like these, and her twenty years of labour in the religious life were devoted to their gradual but steady development. It exposed her to many misapprehensions, and gave rise to much perplexity on the part of those who saw the machinery of her institute, so to speak, in its separate pieces, and were ignorant of the principle on which they were put together. They heard one while of her Congregation embracing all the active works of charity, and at another of the recital of the Divine Office, and the adoption of other spiritual exercises which, in their eyes, seemed ex-

clusively suited to an enclosed Community. And the result was, that, in some quarters, the Congregation was represented as not yet settled, and its Rule as subject to change, according to the caprice of the Foundress. In others, doubts and misgivings were entertained as to the stability of the whole affair: Mother Margaret was attempting too much; she was trying to combine two opposite extremes; she was overtaxing human capabilities, and imposing on her Religious obligations under which they would never be able to persevere. It seems therefore but just, now that the author of the work has passed to her reward, for her children to render their testimony to the practical wisdom of that principle which she was raised up by God, in our age and country, to re-assert. For, be it remembered, it is no new principle in the Church. It is truly but the good "old wine"[1] of Catholic antiquity. Active work is not altogether a thing of modern creation; St. Dominic preached, St. Thomas wrote and taught in the schools, and there were Orders without number for visiting the sick and the imprisoned, for serving in the hospitals, and tending lepers, and redeeming captives, and taking care of the insane, before the modern theory had arisen of stripping religious life of half its strength in order to wed it to activity. And, earlier still, the Benedictine Fathers had found out how to unite the work of education with the life of a monk, so that some of the austerest saints who fill the calendar of the Church have been members of a pre-eminently teaching order, which educated all Europe in its schools. It is therefore no new thing in the Church for religious men and women to teach and to minister to the necessities of their neighbour; and in seeking to link these active duties to all the essential obligations of religious life, Mother Margaret was but returning to the old paths, and carrying out the maxims of the saints. Her work has simply been the re-assertion of

[1] Luke v. 39.

an ancient principle—the reconstruction of a very ancient work. It is the principle so distinctly laid down in the Constitutions of the Dominican Order, namely, that "teaching and preaching," by which may be understood all the spiritual works of mercy, "are acts that proceed from the abundance and fulness of contemplation;" that, in teaching, we "impart to others the fruit of contemplation," and that the Order of Preachers is essentially and principally designed for these duties, "in order thereby to communicate to others the fruits of contemplation, and to procure the salvation of souls."

And her work has succeeded, not merely because it was wrought out by the hands of a great and skilful artist, but because it had in itself the elements of success. It has not been imposed by one powerful will on passive subjects; but they have ever borne a ready witness to its practical benefits to themselves; and had the determination of such things depended on the votes of the majority, and not on the discretion of Superiors, many of the developments of this principle which have taken place in the Congregation, and which some critics regarded as capricious changes, would have been anticipated rather than delayed.

The foundation at Leicester was begun in the Lent of the year 1860. A small number of Religious took up their residence in a house occupying the site of part of the old Lancastrian College called the Newark. A great field of useful labour seemed open to them among the women and girls employed in the woollen manufactories, and their night school was soon crowded. Mother Margaret took great interest in this work, and in one of her letters she announces, with a certain amount of glee, that she is once more mistress of a class, and is teaching *b, a, ba*, to some full-grown scholars. Difficulties, however, presented themselves in the way of securing the property at Leicester, and the Community was obliged to be withdrawn in the August of 1861. The commencement at Leicester took place at

a very sorrowful period to Mother Margaret ; one marked by the death of two holy souls especially dear to her. The first of these was her valued friend, Mother Mary Clare Knight, Prioress of St. Benedict's Convent, Rugeley. This venerable Religious had kept her solemn jubilee the year previously, at which time Mother Margaret spent a week at the convent, and was present at all the interesting ceremonies usual on such occasions. One day in that week of religious festivity was always remembered with emotion by those who were present, and was numbered among the beautiful days of their lives. By special permission of the Bishop,twelve of the Religious from St. Dominic's Convent visited St. Benedict's Priory, and were admitted within the enclosure, where they spent the day, joining the Community in all their exercises, and offering their congratulations to the venerable jubilarian.

The spectacle of these two religious families, united in such close ties of religious fellowship, and gathered round Superiors so respected and so beloved, was one not easily forgotten ; and the very thought of that meeting seems still fragrant with the " precious ointment" of charity which flowed from Aaron's head and beard, " down to the skirt of his garment." The beautiful picture was ineffaceably stamped on our memory; the two mothers seated side by side surrounded by their children, the white wool of St. Dominic mingled with the darker cowl of St. Benedict. And when, towards the close of the day, a song of congratulation was sung by the Religious, how dexterously did Mother Mary Clare contrive to apply its language to the friend who sat beside her, indicating her now and then by a gesture of the hand, whilst Mother Margaret would bow her head gently, as though returning the compliments to herself. Then, yielding to the entreaties of her guests, the Prioress of St. Benedict's sang them her own favourite spiritual song. But when the singer came to one verse in which she spoke of the joys of that hour which would

reunite her with her Spouse, there was a dissentient chorus, for none could endure to hear her allude to the departure which they well knew could not long be deferred ; but she would not be interrupted, and made her voice heard clearly and joyfully above all the rest, till Mother Margaret could bear it no longer, but burst into tears. The tears, however, were soon wiped away, and then came her turn to sing. A little bashfully she produced her leathern purse, and took out of it the well-worn paper containing the words of" Daily, daily ;" and when one of her children offered to assist her in pitching the right note to begin, she playfully pushed her away, saying, " Get along with you, I will sing to my Mother by myself ! "

In less than a year after that happy day, Mother Margaret was again summoned to Rugeley on a very different occasion. It was to attend the dying bed of her beloved friend, with whom she remained to the last. Most beautiful is the picture which she draws in her letters of that holy death-bed. " It is a most calm and peaceful end," she writes ; " she has ever had love for her attraction, and she is dying with the same. Every aspiration is love and confidence. Hers must be a most innocent soul : what will an old sinner like me do at the last ? " And again, after delivering to the Bishop the parting expressions of gratitude and devotion with which Mother Mary Clare had intrusted her, she adds : " I cannot say it in the same glowing terms with which she has expressed herself, for it is wonderful to see her presence of mind on every subject, and her great desire to die. It is one continual act of love and confidence : she speaks as though dying with joy, and longing to see her God."

Mother Mary Clare's death took place on the 13th of May 1860, and Mother Margaret had not long returned to her convent when she was called on to make the sacrifice of another most precious life. Sister Mary Philomena Berkeley had been professed on the Feast of the Immaculate

Conception 1853, and two years later was appointed Mistress of Novices—a post which she continued to fill up to the time of her lamented death. The exalted opinion which Mother Margaret entertained of her sanctity, and the implicit confidence she reposed in her, can be understood by those alone who had the happiness of being associated with the seven years of her religious life. The beauty of her character was one not easily conveyed in words, and might easily have escaped recognition in the world; but in the cloister it gained for her the well-merited eulogium which declared her "the perfect model of every religious virtue."[1]

The symptoms of consumption first showed themselves in the month of March, and made such rapid progress as to terminate fatally on the 16th of July. It was a severe trial to Mother Margaret, who at all times acutely felt the death of her religious Sisters, whilst in the present instance her grief was enhanced by the irreparable loss inflicted on the Community. "You may truly call her *a saint*," she writes; "I never saw anything like her, and, out of heaven, I do not suppose I ever shall. It has been a severe cross to part from her, and yet I would not bring her back from the glory she now enjoys for all the world could give." Many prayers had been offered for her recovery, but, at the termination of a Novena to St. Philip Neri, the case became so manifestly hopeless that Mother Margaret concluded the devotions by the recital of the Litany of Resignation to the Will of God. It was the accomplishment of her act of sacrifice by which, as it were, she gave up her beloved child to God. On the morning of Sister Mary Philomena's departure, when her speech was already failing, she tried to console her weeping Mother, and to utter the last words, "The will of God, the will of God!" Mother Margaret understood these words as addressed to her, and remarked

[1] These words were engraved on a brass memorial, which, by express permission of the Bishop, was placed over her grave by her father, Robert Berkeley, Esq., of Spetchley Park, Worcester.

afterwards, " She taught resignation, as she was dying, to her unworthy mother." And she did her best to practise the lesson, exerting herself to overcome her natural feelings, and the same morning, in spite of her extreme distress, to go to the parlour to a visitor who had unexpectedly called. With all her efforts, however, she could not restrain her tears, and, with her usual simplicity, she excused herself, saying, " I ought to be glad about it, but I am not."

The following beautiful letter, from Father Faber, written to a member of the Community on occasion of Sister Mary Philomena's death, will be read with interest :—

" St. Mary's, Sydenham Hill,
July 18, 1860.

" My dear Sister in Jesus Christ,—Many thanks for your kind letter informing me of Sister Mary Philomena's death. We must not grudge her her beautiful peace in the bosom of God. The salvation of a soul seems more and more wonderful each time a holy death brings it near to us. It is a joy to think of all the glory God has got out of her pure life and her blessed end. But I well know, from my own position, the blameless selfishness—to call it by a rough word—which zeal for souls, and therefore for the interests of our Communities, brings over us, and so I deeply feel for you in the loss you have sustained. It is like a tree being blown down which kept the cold wind away from our flower-beds. Yes, my dear Sister, are we not all so busy in this poor wicked England, and all obliged to do so many things at once, and to do them all so hurriedly, that we have less time than we could wish for prayer and praise, and worshipful contemplation, and a thousand delicacies of divine love ? And if so, is not a Community enriched when it sends some of its members up into the eternal peace of God, to sing, and praise, and contemplate, on its behalf ? We want to stop and look at God, and to delay over His works, and to do leisurely

justice to His exquisite graces and grand operations ; and we have not time. Work runs away with us ; souls are clamouring to be saved ; we must preach when we are pining to pray ; we must direct when we want to be listening to the whispers of the Holy Ghost down in our own poor souls. So those who have gone before us must do part of our work for us, and must represent us in heaven. Depend upon it, you will shortly have some beautiful vocation, and it will be the shoot that springs where God has cut down the life of Sister Mary Philomena ; and remember *how often shoots come up double !* Give my very, very best love to your dearest Mother. She will not be scandalised at my message : it is one of her many brave gifts, that her heart is too big to be scandalised. Tell her I do not like to hear of her not allowing this loss to be called a cross. Was Calvary no cross to Mary ? Naughty woman ! she must have a good cry,and a good many good cries, and not brazen it out in this way. Is it not just her business to grow flowers for God in those smoky Pottery gardens of hers ? And if God comes and cuts Himself a nosegay before her Reverence intended Him to have it, she must not pretend not to feel it ; and yet it is just His blessed way, and therefore just what she might have expected Him to do. As soon as I got your letter last night, I went and said the Rosary of the Seven Dolours for dear Sister Mary Philomena. God's sanctity is unutterably exacting, and I often think very holy souls may go to purgatory for things I am sure I shall not be sent to purgatory for. The very height of their future place in heaven may even cause a little delay in getting there. You may be sure, therefore, of our best prayers for your beloved Sister.—Believe me, my dear Sister, with great respect, your affectionate servant in Jesus,

F. W. FABER, *Cong. Orat.*"

Extensive additions to St. Dominic's Convent were

begun on the 2nd of August, 1861, the first steps being taken towards commencing the choir by the demolition of "Job's" and the adjacent cottages. The choir and chapter-room, and the sanctuary of the church, were completed early in the year 1863, and on the 4th of February took place the solemn rite of the Consecration. Invitations had been sent to every priest in the diocese, and in addition to the secular priests who were present, fifteen of the Dominican Fathers assisted at the ceremony. On the following day, being the Feast of St. Agatha, the church was opened for public worship in the presence of their Lordships the Bishop of Birmingham, the Bishop of Shrewsbury, and the Bishop of Clifton. It was naturally an occasion of deep and solemn interest to all the Community, but to Mother Margaret herself it was overpowering. What she felt in it all was the goodness of God to His unworthy creatures. "It was no work of mine," she said; "I sat at my desk and wrote my letters, and the church rose." And she was heard murmuring to herself words that remind us of some of those on the dying lips of St. Catherine: "Not a bit for self; all for the honour and glory of God." As we have elsewhere said, the words of the Epistle of the Mass were observed as singularly appropriate, as applied to her who on that day witnessed the reward of so many toils and sacrifices. One of her favourite ejaculations consisted of the verse, *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi?* And on this occasion these words were set to music, and sung as the Offertory of the Mass.

It was in the October of 1863, that Mother Margaret paid her first visit to Rhyl, in North Wales, where the prospect of establishing a convent had presented itself. She was pleased at the thoughts of working for Wales, and recalled her dream in Belgium, often repeating that St. Winifred had saved her life, and that she was bound to do something to honour her in return. This visit gave her the very rare indulgence of a complete holiday. The

beauty of the sea, and sky, and distant mountains, delighted her, and she listened to the sound of the waves on the shingly beach, saying it was "like the water praising God." "It was a real pleasure," she writes, "to be on the sea-shore there, and see only the beautiful calm sea: no letters to write or read, no knocks at the door, and no visitors. It was only too short, like all things that are good. The sea gives such a grand idea of God—so great and mighty, and we such tiny things. We got where we could not see anything but the blue above and the blue beneath. Wales seems hard to convert, but Our Lady of the Rosary will do much."

A house was purchased at Rhyl, in which a small Community was established on the 5th of June, 1864. But the hopes that had been entertained of finding an opening there for the labours of the Religious proved fallacious, and they were finally withdrawn in the August of 1866, when the necessity presented itself of providing members for a more important foundation in London. Another foundation, begun in the same year with that at Rhyl, enjoyed a more prosperous destiny. In the spring of 1846, Mother Margaret was invited by the Right Rev. Dr. Vaughan, Bishop of Plymouth, to found a house in some part of his diocese, and the village of St. Mary Church, near Torquay, was proposed as suitable for the establishment of an Orphanage for Girls. The establishment of two foundations in one year made great demands on the resources of the Community, but Mother Margaret could not refuse. "I know I shall have to suffer for it," she writes, "and all the feelings of fear, doubt, and anxiety that will follow closely. But the last six or eight months there has been one continual interior push—a voice urging me to do more for God, and saying we were not doing all we could." She sometimes said, alluding to this interior impulse, that she felt, "driven about like a thing of steam."

A house, with some ground adjoining, was purchased at

St. Mary Church, and six Religious were sent to form the little colony in the month of August, Mother Margaret herself accompanying them.

In no previous foundation had they met with so much encouragement as in this. Mother Margaret could never find words to express the paternal kindness of Bishop Vaughan, who awaited the Sisters at their new dwelling, and helped to establish them there as comfortably as circumstances would allow. She was accustomed often to remind her children of the lasting debt of gratitude to him which they had thus incurred, saying that on this occasion "he had made himself their servant." There was another friend and benefactress to whom a similar tribute of gratitude must be offered in this place, though she has already gone to receive a better reward than human thanks can offer. To the zeal and the prayers of Mrs. Lilias Bonar the idea of this foundation must, in the first instance, be attributed. When those ardent prayers were crowned at last, she spared no efforts in forwarding the design she had so much at heart. During the extreme heats of an unusually sultry summer she was constantly on the spot, directing every preparation in person. The Sisters, on arriving at the house, found, instead of the bare unfurnished walls which usually greeted them on such occasions, six rooms, fitted up precisely on the model of their religious cells—this being the work of their kind friend, who had been at singular pains to get beds and presses identical with those she had seen at Stone. The house was clean, the garden in order, and an excellent dinner awaiting them. Those who are familiar with the troubles and difficulties of St. Theresa's foundations, will understand how these consolations were appreciated by the new-comers, and how greatly such a welcome helped to make them feel at home.

At the very time when Mrs. Bonar was exerting herself with such unwearied assiduity for the service of the Community, she was suffering under the first symptoms of an

illness which a few months later proved fatal. Her prayers for St. Mary Church had been heard and granted ; possibly also her life had been accepted as a sacrifice for the same object—a sacrifice which, it may be, has obtained for this foundation the special blessing which has since rested upon it. She died at Edinburgh on the 10th of February, 1865, having been nursed for the last four weeks of her life by a Religious from Stone, where a solemn Requiem and Procession for the Dead were offered for her soul, as an esteemed friend and benefactress—her Grace the Duchess of Argyll, sister to the deceased, assisting at the ceremony.

Mother Margaret was herself suffering much, both in health and spirits, whilst engaged in the arduous work of this foundation. " This place has too much of the world's nonsense about it," she writes, " to suit my health. I have not been able to read a line except my Office since I have been here, and all my meditation is ' Lord, help me ! ' ' Jesus, direct me ! ' So you see what a weak instrument God deigns to make use of. . . . It is a most beautiful country, like a beautiful picture, but you soon weary of that. The sea puts me in mind of the Mediterranean, it is so calm and blue—never in a passion, like Rhyl, though I like Rhyl best for all that. It is a paradise for scenery, but all is wearisome except conventual life. Each day proves that our happiness consists in our regular life, and the more regular it is, the more happy."

The house, indeed, which for long served as a temporary convent (bearing the title of Our Lady, Help of Christians), was not very easily adapted to regular life.[1] It occupied the summit of the hill where stands the village of St. Mary Church, which takes its name from the parish church dedicated to Our Lady. According to local legends, the first Christians who established themselves in this locality commenced the erection of their church in a valley lying to the west, but were directed to remove it to the neigh-

[1] A Convent with Guest House was erected in course of time.

bouring hill by a mysterious voice, which uttered the verse—

> "If St. Mary's build ye will,
> Ye must build it on the hill."

Within the last twenty years the old parish church has been gradually disappearing, and has been replaced by a new and more sumptuous pile. By the time the last vestige of the ancient building had been pulled down, a magnificent Catholic church arose on St. Mary's Hill, the erection of which was due to the munificence of another benefactor, William Chatto, Esq., who, at his own expense, built the church and presbytery on ground belonging to the convent.

As soon as the Community were fairly established at St. Mary Church, it became necessary to provide an Orphanage House for the reception of the Catholic Orphan Girls of the Diocese, who, by the desire of the Bishop, were to be intrusted to the care of the Religious. This building was erected mainly at the expense of the Community, aided by contributions from the Faithful, and is capable of containing between eighty and ninety orphans.

The same year which had witnessed these two fresh foundations was rendered further memorable in our annals by the visits of some illustrious guests. The Most Rev. Master-General of the Order[1] made his second visitation of the English province in 1864, and on the 11th of July he visited St. Dominic's Convent, in company with the Most Rev. F. Louis Gonin, O.P., who had just been appointed to the archbishopric of Trinidad. The Father-General spent part of three days at Stone, and expressed himself gratified at the progress of the Community, which, at his previous visit twelve years before, had numbered but twenty-five Religious, occupying the single convent of St. Catherine's, Clifton, and had now expanded into a Congregation, with three convents actually established, and two in course of foundation. After the Sunday Mass, the

[1] Father A Vincent Jandel.

Religious having assembled in the chapter-room, the Father-General delivered them a beautiful address in French, in which he congratulated them on these tokens of progress, and took occasion to remind them that such progress, to be real, must be inward, as well as outward, and that even regular observance was insufficient in itself, unless animated with the spirit of prayer, charity, and a pure intention. He gave them, as the theme of his discourse, the words of the apostle, *Vide vocationem vestram, et digne ambulate in ea*, and after recalling to their minds that the vocation of the Third Order was in its measure and degree to the Apostolate, he proceeded to show in what manner its apostolic functions could be discharged by religious women—partly by their labours in the instruction of youth, but still more efficaciously by example and by prayer—holding up before them, as the model for their imitation in this respect, their glorious patroness, St. Catherine.

On leaving Stone, his Paternity proceeded to Ireland, visiting the convent at Stoke on his way thither, and again on his return passing a day at Stone, which he left on the 1st of August. Between these two visits the Community had likewise the honour of entertaining his Eminence Cardinal Wiseman, an event which must be reckoned among the pleasurable remembrances of this year. He was received with the customary honours at the convent door, and the population of Stone, true to the English character, forgot their antipathy to a cardinal's hat in the joy they felt in welcoming an illustrious stranger. The two days he spent in Stone were festal days to the inhabitants both Protestant and Catholic : the rifle band, in compliance with a suggestion from Mother Margaret, were good-humoured enough to attend, and to play their best tunes under the windows whilst his Eminence was dining, and even the post-boy who drove his carriage appeared in a new scarlet jacket and a scarf of the Pope's colours.

One might say it was a foreshadowing of that greater and more extraordinary demonstration of respect which burst forth a little later, on the memorable occasion of the Cardinal's funeral. His health was even then breaking, but the rare charm of his conversation and of his kind and courteous manner failed not to be felt, as it ever was, by all who approached him. The Religious, who assembled to receive his Eminence in the Community-room, would probably never forget his graceful narration of a little story which he afterwards printed in the *Month*, entitled, "The Ancient Saints of God;" or the happy words of peace and good-will with which he addressed the honest riflemen, as they stood on the lawn beneath the window, eliciting from them three hearty cheers of welcome.

This was the last visit which his Eminence ever paid to any of our convents. A few months later the proposal was communicated in his name to Mother Margaret, that she should make a foundation in London, for the purpose of taking charge of a Refuge for Females discharged from the prisons. The project led to a mature consideration of the question how far work of this nature was compatible with the object and spirit of the Congregation. The result was that Mother Margaret determined on respectfully declining the proposal of his Eminence, and the grounds on which this determination was based were fully confirmed and approved by the judgment of her ecclesiastical superiors.

One other event of a joyous and festive nature remains to be noticed before entering on the narrative of that closing period of Mother Margaret's life which was so deeply marked with the character of the cross. By a Pontifical decree, dated April 13th, 1866, the Holy Father was pleased to declare St. Catherine of Siena Secondary Patroness of the city of Rome. This auspicious event was announced to the Order by the Master-General in a circular, wherein he likewise made known that his Holiness

had raised the Feast of St. Catherine to a higher dignity, and that it would thenceforth be celebrated in the Order with a Solemn Octave. By none was the intelligence received with greater joy than by the English Congregation of the Third Order, which bears the name, and has placed itself in so special a manner under the patronage of this Seraphic Virgin. Mother Margaret immediately petitioned the Bishop for leave to celebrate a solemn Triduo of thanksgiving at St. Dominic's, and, permission being granted, the Triduo was appointed to take place between the Feast of the Stigmas of St. Catherine, which that year fell on Sunday the 17th of June, and the 21st of June, the anniversary of the Pope's coronation. "We are meditating a great Triduo to our Holy Mother," writes Mother Margaret: "we shall offer it all in her honour for God's Church and the Pope. *Of course, the Cross will follow*, but that must be our daily bread." The conviction that some peculiar crosses would follow these special devotions greatly occupied her, but in no way caused her zeal to slacken. "I have made a bargain with our Holy Mother," she said; "I know she is sure to send us the cross, but I tell her I don't mind that, provided she gives us *souls* in return." And it would seem as if the bargain had been accepted. The Triduo (which in reality lasted five days instead of three) was a solemn and splendid festival. An indult had been obtained from his Holiness, granting the same indulgences to those who should attend the devotions as had been attached to the Triduo celebrated at the Church of the Minerva, in Rome. The publication of these indulgences would, it was hoped, induce many to attend, and to profit by this occasion of approaching the Sacraments., Nor was this hope disappointed. Week-day services seldom succeed in attracting a very numerous congregation in England, where worldly cares urge their imperative claims on every day but Sunday, yet on this occasion the church was crowded during each

one of the five days, which had all the character of a spiritual retreat. Hundreds approached the Sacraments, some of whom had for years neglected their duties ; and it seemed as though St. Catherine herself was on earth again, and at her favourite work of converting sinners.

Their Lordships the Bishops of Birmingham, Shrewsbury, and Clifton, assisted at the services of the week, together with a large number of clergy, both secular and regular. The devotions were opened on Sunday the 17th, by a Pontifical High Mass, sung by the Bishop of Clifton, and in the afternoon, after Vespers, a solemn procession of the relics was made round the garden. Throughout the five days the relics of St. Catherine were exposed on a lofty throne, erected in the central aisle,and were likewise offered to the people for veneration every evening after the Benediction. These relics, which are very considerable in quantity, were presented to our Congregation by the Master-General, as before stated, on occasion of the translation of the body of St. Catherine from the Rosary Chapel of the Church of the Minerva to the High Altar of the same church,which took place in 1855 ; and, when the cloister of St. Dominic's Convent was completed, a chapel was built for the express purpose of receiving these precious relics, which must ever be regarded as one of the great treasures of the Community.

In addition to the devotions specified above, there were sermons morning and evening, and afternoon catechism for the children—five confessors attending in the confessionals until a late hour every night. On Thursday, the last of the five days' devotion, Pontifical High Mass was sung by the Bishop of the diocese, assisted by the Vicar-General and the cathedral chapter. An additional interest attached to the ceremony, from the fact that it was the twentieth anniversary of his Lordship's episcopacy, and a special Votive Mass was therefore sung. His Lordship preached in the evening on the public life of St. Catherine. Then

followed the closing procession, the description of which we shall take from that which appeared in the public journals.

"The procession which closed the ceremonies of this week was formed in the cloisters of the convent, and proceeded through the church into the private garden of the Community. It was indeed a magnificent procession, and carried back the mind to the glories of religion in England before the Reformation. Following the cross-bearer and acolytes came the children of the schools and a large body of Religious. There were also deputations of Religious, representing various convents in the diocese, such as the Sisters of Charity of St. Paul, and the Sisters of Mercy from Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and Handsworth. Then followed relics of virgins and confessors, carried in a beautiful cedar chest by two priests in white dalmatics, and followed by another large body of Religious of the Dominican Convent, accompanying the banners of the Five Joyful Mysteries of the Holy Rosary, embroidered in tapestry work. A second chest of cedar-wood, containing the relics of martyrs, and another with the entire bones of one of the martyrs discovered in the Roman catacombs, were borne by priests in red dalmatics, preceded and followed by a number of the nuns with the banners of the Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. Then followed the cantors in copes, and the splendid reliquary of silver and crystal in which were contained the precious relics of the seraphic virgin, St. Catherine. This was borne by four Dominican Fathers in white dalmatics—namely, the Very Rev. Father Vicar-Provincial, the Very Rev. F. Aylward, and the Rev. F. F. Augustine Malthus, and another Religious.

"After this came the singers from Stoke, then a long line of secular and regular clergy, and the canons, followed by his Lordship the Bishop in cope and mitre, and bearing his pastoral staff—his train being borne by a little boy, the

son of Percy Radcliffe, Esq. A very large number of the Congregation followed, and throughout its length were formed picturesque groups of children, holding banners and singing with great spirit. Notwithstanding the very large concourse of persons, the most perfect order prevailed. The sight of that splendid procession, with more than sixty nuns in the habit worn by their Seraphic Mother, and with his Lordship the Bishop, the chapter, and the clergy, surrounding the reliquary containing some of the bones of that saint so beloved and so honoured by our Lord, will never be forgotten by any who had the happy privilege of seeing it and forming one of its members. The solemn chant of the Dominican Litany of the Saints was first intoned by the cantors, and answered by the Religious and the clergy; and then the psalm, *Laudate Dominum de cœlis*, was sung by all, followed by an English hymn in honour of St. Catherine, composed for the occasion, begging the aid of her prayers in behalf of the Holy Father.

"When the procession regained the church, Solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given by the Bishop, during which the Te Deum was chanted, and then the relic of St. Catherine was venerated and kissed by all present, while the hymn to St. Catherine was again sung."

The closing ceremony of which the writer speaks was perhaps the most striking feature of the Triduo. An enthusiasm took possession of all present not often seen in an English congregation, the *sang froid Britannique* for once gave way, and as the clergy in their sacred vestments, and the canons in their robes, went up, two and two, to kiss the relic, the chorus of the hymn was caught up and repeated by hundreds of voices with a fervour which was literally overwhelming—

"Holy Mother, guard our Pontiff!
Raging billows round him foam;
Saint Seraphic! still the tempest,
Aid the Church, and pray for Rome!"

At the conclusion of the devotions an address of congratulation to the Pope on the twentieth anniversary of his coronation was drawn up and signed by the three Bishops and all the clergy present, to which a gracious answer was afterwards received.

One circumstance connected with this great solemnity was equally a cause of surprise and of gratitude to Mother Margaret and her religious children. The desire which Mother Margaret had entertained from the first of establishing in her Community the daily recitation of the Divine Office had increased rather than diminished with time. The grievous troubles of the Church at large appeared to her to demand from all the spouses of Christ greater sacrifices and increased fervour in prayer. "What sad times we live in!" she wrote, so far back as the year 1862: "it makes me heart-sick to hear the flippant remarks on God and His Church. It makes me wish more and more to say the Divine Office to bind us more closely to God and the Church. It seems as if we ought to be always in prayer."

Before, however, again urging on superiors her request for this great privilege, she thought it prudent to test the possibility of undertaking so great an obligation in a Community devoted to active works by a practical experiment. It had long been the custom in this Community to recite the Divine Office throughout the entire Paschal season, and this year it was agreed to continue the longer office[1] for a given time, in order to prove whether or no it could reasonably be undertaken. Meanwhile she herself made it the subject of earnest prayer, that she might live to see the accomplishment of this wish, so dear to her own heart and to that of all her children. Her prayers were unexpectedly granted, and that by a spontaneous act on the part of his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne, who, at the close of the Triduo, announced his consent for the recitation of the

[1] The Dominican Office for Matins throughout the Paschal season consists of one Nocturn only.

Divine Office by the Congregation in the following welcome letter :—

"My dearest Sister in Christ,—I have delayed until this festival of your Seraphic Mother St. Catherine to inform you that I now withdraw all further opposition to your reciting the Divine Office daily in choir. The fact that St. Catherine recited the Dominican Office, and that our Lord often said it with her has made a strong impression on my mind. Nor could I be insensible to the strong desire which has grown and warmed in the Community for the possession of this privilege—this closer bond with the spirit of St. Catherine, and this more complete expression of the Dominican spirit ; this more thorough conformity with the prayer of the Universal Church—the cycle of festivals in which the mysteries of God, the friends of God, and the saints and martyrs of your Order, are perpetually honoured in their season. I pray Almighty God to bless you and your spiritual children, to give you the love, and zeal, and patience, which distinguished the great model of your Order, whose Stigmata, those marks of our Lord's infinite love, you are about to celebrate ; and to keep ever among you both the love of the Sisterhood, the love of souls, and the love of the Church.—And I remain your devoted spiritual father, ✠ W. B. Ullathorne.

To the Rev. Mother Prioress-Provincial."

This letter was received with universal joy and gratitude by the Community. It was one among the many instances which had come home to them of the omnipotence of prayer, and of the truth of those words of the Psalmist so often quoted by Mother Margaret on such occasions, "Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart." Had this letter been written as a favourable reply to the petition of the Congregation, it would have been felt as a great cause for thankfulness, but coming, as

. Priory of O.L. of Angels, Stoke-on-Trent (*Photo*: *Marshall, Keene & Co., Brighton*).
. St. Mary's Priory, St. Marychurch, Torquay
. Convent of Holy Rosary, Kelvedon
. Choir of Priory, Hawick, Scotland
. Exterior of Priory, Hawick

Photographs by Lofthouse, Crosbie & Co. Hampton Hill.

it did, unsought and unsolicited, it was doubly precious, and must ever be numbered among the special graces vouchsafed to us by God. This spiritual joy greatly counterbalanced the temporal losses which followed ; for the cross which Mother Margaret had so confidently anticipated was not tardy in appearing. It was the year of the great cattle plague. Hitherto the cows of the Community had escaped infection, but on the second day of the Triduo the disease appeared among them, and within a week or two nine of them had to be destroyed. This misfortune was followed by other temporal losses—especially the failure of a bank in which had been deposited all the money destined for building the new orphanage at St. Mary Church.

Mother Margaret made known to her Community the loss of the cows in some characteristic words : " I have to announce to you, dear Sisters, that it has pleased our Lord to send us a heavy loss by visiting our cows, and three of them were shot last night. Of course it is a great loss to us, but ' the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.' All we have is His gift, and He can take it when He pleases. Where there is no sin there is nothing to grieve about, and we must hope that, as He has taken our three cows, He will give us three souls instead." Equally characteristic in another way was the affectionate scolding she bestowed on St. Catherine for taking her so literally at her word. " I asked her to give me *souls*," she said, " *but I never meant her to take the cows* ! " Speaking to one of her Religious on the subject of all these losses, she said, " I assure you I could sing for joy; they are such a mark of God's love. I mind nothing so long as I can keep my eye on Him ; it is only when anxiety obscures that view that I suffer." And about the same time she writes : " We must all say *Fiat*. It is God's work, and we must be content. Our Holy Mother cares for nothing but our perfection, so she sends us these crosses to keep us down."

And the year did not pass without another token being

given that St. Catherine was indeed watching and working for their spiritual good. The yearly retreat, which took place in August, was this year given by his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne, and was entirely based on the teaching of St. Catherine. " It was like no retreat we ever had before," writes one of the Religious, " and made us feel that we never before knew the treasure we possess in the writings of our holy Mother." Others in like manner wrote describing it as " a time of great and special grace," and " something that would last them for their lifetime." This spiritual consolation came at a moment when Mother Margaret was enduring unusual bodily suffering. A severe attack of illness in the spring of this year had undermined her general health ; in addition to which, the affection of the skin, to which she had always been subject, had now reached a height which made it all but unbearable. " I often feel ready to cry with it " she said ; " it is as if the evil one had peppered me from head to foot." The temporal losses of the Community affected her but slightly, and in spite of them she was meditating a second foundation in Wales. To the prudential arguments urged in opposition, she only replied, " God has never failed us, and He never will. If it were to spend on ourselves that we wanted the money I should be afraid, but He knows we could not spend less than we do on our food and clothing, and that we only want it for His own work."

It was the will of God, however, that not Wales but London should be the site of Mother Margaret's last foundation. In the month of August, 1866, a proposal was made by his Grace, Archbishop Manning, to place under the care of Mother Margaret and her Religious an orphanage, destined for receiving the Catholic orphan girls who might be given up by the workhouse authorities. The deep interest felt by his Grace in this work, and the unwearied manner in which he devoted himself to obtain from Government the much-desired measures, are well-

known to the Catholic public. He had secured a large house at Walthamstow, in Essex, for the purpose of receiving a certain number of the orphans, and this he now offered to Mother Margaret, rent free, for three years, a certain allowance towards the support of each orphan being expected from the Poor-Law Board. Mother Margaret was most desirous to meet his Grace's wishes, and the work contemplated engaged all her sympathies; she entirely overlooked the fact, obvious as it was, that the acceptance of Government money necessarily involved the acceptance of Government inspection also; and she therefore willingly consented to give the services of her Religious on the proposed conditions. On the 20th of August, therefore, she went to London, with one companion, to inspect the house, and come to a final agreement regarding the whole undertaking. After their interview with his Grace they proceeded to Walthamstow House, a spacious mansion, capable of containing a hundred children, with five acres of garden ground. Its agreeable aspect, however, did not seem to inspire Mother Margaret with any pleasurable sentiments. Her drive through the eastern quarters of London had impressed her with painful thoughts, and she could not bear the idea of being located in a fine house, far out of the way of those masses of perishing souls for whom she longed to work. She had been told by some Protestant ladies that the parish of Stepney was one specially remarkable for the spiritual destitution of its Catholic population, and though there seemed but little chance of its being possible to undertake any additional work in that part of the world, she determined, before leaving London, to pay it a visit of inspection. In her second interview with the Archbishop Mother Margaret gave utterance to her feelings in her usual simple way. His Grace having inquired what she thought of Walthamstow, she replied, that it was a beautiful place, and very suitable for an orphanage, and that she

and her Sisters would be happy to begin there as soon as he wished. " But oh, my Lord ! " she added, " can't you send us to *some dirty place ?* " The Archbishop smiled, and hearing her attraction towards Stepney, advised her to go and make the acquaintance of Father M'Quoin, of Stratford, who was most anxious to find some Community to assist him in the infant mission of Bow, a quarter of the world which was supposed to possess all the required qualifications. To Bow, therefore, Mother Margaret and her companion proceeded. To those unacquainted with the geography of East London it may be necessary to explain that this plebeian suburb stands on the extreme borders of Middlesex, and takes its name from the one-arched bridge thrown over the river Lea by the good Queen Maude, wife to King Henry I., in thanksgiving for her escape from drowning when passing the same river by ford.[1] Its fine old parish church, dedicated to Our Lady, and built in the reign of Edward III., still stands, as in the time of that monarch," in the midst of the king's highway," and some years ago another relic of old Catholic times existed in the beautiful little Church of Bromley St. Leonards, formerly the chapel of that convent of nuns who, as Chaucer tells us, taught French of doubtful quality to their fashionable pupils. For in those days, and at a later period, Stratford, and Bow, and Hackney, and Stepney, instead of being the squalid suburbs of the commercial side of the metropolis, were pleasant country villages, and St. Leonard's Church was a favourite burial-place for royal and noble personages.[2]

[1] Leland says that " Matilda, wife to Henry I., *having herself been well washed in the water,* causid two bridges to be buildid in a place one mile distant from the Old Ford, of the which one was situated over Lea, at the head of the town of Stratford, nowe callid Bowe, because the bridge was arched like unto a bowe, a rare piece of worke, for befor that time the like had never been seen in England. . . . Moreover, she gave manors and a mill unto the Abbess of Barking for the repayringe of the bridges and the highwaie."—Let. Collect. Vol. I. p. 55. The old bridge becoming ruinous, was removed in course of time, when many curiosities were found among the *débris.*

[2] To be quite accurate, we should say that the ***nunnery*** was dedicated

A great change, however, has passed over the scene since those days, and there is probably no quarter of London, or its vicinity, which presented a more desolate aspect than the districts lying either side of the broad Mile End Road. They contained an immense Catholic population, the spiritual wants of which, in those days, were only provided for by one small chapel at Stratford. So little was known of the real state of this vast district, that a few years earlier, when the Rev. Father McQuoin was appointed to the mission, he was assured he would not find work enough to employ him. He soon found that there was sufficient work not only for one, but for many priests, and, in spite of limited resources, his unwearied activity and zeal succeeded in erecting a new church at Stratford ; a spacious school-church on the Barking Road, near the Victoria Docks ; a school-chapel at Bromley St. Leonard's, where, at the time of which we speak, a small community of French and English nuns had the care of about two hundred children, and another school for the

to St. Leonard, and the *chapel* itself to St. Mary the Virgin. The convent was founded in the reign of Henry II., for a prioress and nine nuns, of the Order of St. Benedict. The Chapel, which until its destruction about 1840 was used as the parish church, was an exquisite specimen of Norman architecture. It consisted of a nave and chancel of the same width, the chancel being raised higher than the nave by a single step ; there were handsome stone stalls on the south wall of the chancel, and a finely-worked Norman arch in the west wall, long concealed by plaster. The curious monuments of the seventeenth century which decorated the walls have, it is understood, been preserved, and set up again in the modern church. Some years before the destruction of the old building, excavations were being made for the purpose of repair, and several stone-coffins were disinterred which, on being opened, proved to contain the remains of some of the nuns. Portions of their religious habits were distinctly to be recognized, and on the fourth finger of the right hand of each skeleton was a *leathern* ring. It was proposed to exhibit these remains for a small sum as a curiosity in some public-house, but the proposal reaching the ears of a Protestant gentleman of the neighbourhood, (the father of M. F. R. Drane,) he hastened to the spot, and exerted his influence to prevent the desecration of the bodies, and to procure their re-interment. He would not even allow one of the rings to be removed, but remained on the spot until the coffins were closed, and once more committed to the earth ; an act of religious reverence for the dead which, perhaps, did not pass without its reward.

outlying districts of Plaistow and Irish Row, which was then placed under the care of a community of Ursuline nuns. In short, means and accommodation had been provided for the education of more than a thousand Catholic children, where a few years before not one hundred were receiving any education at all. Mother Margaret's first visit was paid to the chapel at Stratford, the aspect of which was poor enough, as was also that of the school-room. A boy from the school directed them to Father M'Quoin's house, and having delivered the Archbishop's letter of introduction, they were a little surprised to hear him say, on glancing at the name, " Mother Margaret ! Oh, I have been thinking of you a long time, and wishing you would come to Bow ! " He then proposed to take them to the school-chapel at Bromley, dedicated to St. Agnes, after first showing them the rising walls of the church at Stratford ; and having inspected the premises at Bow, Mother Margaret expressed her willingness to come to his assistance, provided a suitable site for a convent could be procured. And so she returned to Stone, pledged to undertake two foundations involving the gravest liabilities, at a time when the finances of the Community were more than usually embarrassed ; yet her confidence never forsook her. To all the fears and remonstrances of others she only replied by saying, " It is the work of God, and He will be sure to provide." At this very time, strange to say, reports were in circulation that large bequests had been made to the Community, which was supposed to be immensely wealthy. "Anxiety about our '*riches*,' " writes Mother Margaret, " is likely to finish me up ; for to wish to do much for the One we love, and not to be able, is a slow martyrdom. I have heard much of our *riches* lately. You know best in what they consist. Oh what a struggle it is to get anything for our good God, who is the giver of all ! "

One comfort was granted her at this time in the appoint-

ment of the Very Rev. Father Augustine Procter as chaplain to the convent at St. Mary Church. This venerable Father survived his appointment little more than four months, but the time, if short, was fruitful, and may be said to have laid a sure foundation of the future mission. He was then seventy years of age, and had just celebrated his full jubilee of fifty years. One of the oldest Fathers of the English Province, he belonged to that past generation of holy priests, of whose toils and sacrifices we in our day are reaping the abundant harvest. The foregoing pages will have shown how constant a friend he had ever shown himself to Mother Margaret and her Institute, which he had befriended and protected in its cradle, and in the service of which he was passing the close of his days. In spite of his advanced age he cheerfully embraced the prospect of a life of missionary labour, and very soon won the respect not only of the little flock of Catholics, but even of the Protestants of the neighbourhood, many of whom declared he was a " man of God," and came to hear his sermons. And truly he looked " a man of God," as he stood at the altar, with his white hair and thin, transparent features, and Sunday after Sunday delivered those simple homilies on the Gospels, so eloquent in their unelaborate earnestness, which found their way straight to the heart and understanding of his audience. One of those homilies must often afterwards have recurred to the minds of some among his hearers : it was suggested by a fatal accident that had recently occurred in the neighbourhood, and was on *death*, and *sudden* death in particular. The voice and gesture of the preacher was singularly impressive ; but whilst warning others of the visitation of God, he was, as will be seen, unconsciously preparing himself to meet his own end. The Rosary Sunday of this year was one of special devotion all over England, being the day appointed by the bishops to be kept as a day of solemn intercession for the Church and the Holy Father. At

Stone and Stoke a great number approached the Sacraments, including even some who had neglected to make their Easter, for, as they said, "they must do something to help the Pope, it was such a shame to leave him all alone!" At Clifton the Exposition was followed by a procession of the most Holy Sacrament, at which the Bishop assisted, and the Rosary was chanted in Latin by a choir of boys. At St. Mary Church the feast was made memorable by the formal establishment of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, an event which has always proved the commencement of solid progress among the people. But the cross followed quickly on this consolation; for towards the end of the month the Protestant agitator Murphy came into the neighbourhood and directed his attacks against the Dominican Community, who were for some weeks made the object of the grossest slanders. Distressing as this trial was, Mother Margaret treated it more lightly than might have been expected. "I don't feel these things as you do," she said to one of her Religious. "God Almighty knows very well they are all lies. What I *do* feel is when those who belong to the Church wound her. You should weep for compassion for your Spouse. We are all so occupied with our own things that no one weeps for Him."

On the 3rd of November the first colony of Religious was sent to take possession of Walthamstow House, and begin the necessary preparations for receiving the children, and Mother Margaret herself followed three days later. She was more than usually depressed and anxious. Something of this she always endured before beginning any new work, but there are indications in her letters of a sense of failing strength, and a longing for rest, that was rare for her to express. "Pray for me," she writes; "you know how dark I always am before beginning. I wonder I ever do begin, but it is not I, it is our dear Lord who pushes the birch broom along, and does what He wishes. It will

be nice when all the work here below is done." A little later she writes, " *I am getting tired of work* ; " and again, " I hope we shall both work on till our work is done, and our dear Lord is satisfied with His poor creatures ; may He give us a resting-place when we have satisfied for all our shortcomings ! " Her stay at Walthamstow did not tend to cheer or encourage her. Arrangements had been made for receiving one hundred children, but it soon became apparent that great difficulties would have to be overcome before the Poor-Law authorities would give them up. The consequent state of inaction was exceedingly trying to Mother Margaret ; she would walk about exclaiming, " Oh, if I could but go and get the children out of the courts ! " If the sound of wheels was heard in the road, she thought it was a conveyance bringing orphans to the door. At last she could endure it no longer, and determined on the Feast of the Presentation to make a present to Our Lady of some children to be supported at the sole charge of the Community. " No children come yet," she writes, " so we intend to take some *gratis* to offer to Our Lady on the Presentation. *L. s. d.* is certainly the god of the English : it does not suit me." She therefore entreated the priest to find her some children, and in the afternoon he brought to the house two destitute little girls. Her delight was unbounded, and turning to one of her Sisters, she said, with a bright look, " Now, don't be afraid, you will see our Lord will feed His own." About six that evening the butcher called at the door with a leg of mutton, which, he said, he had orders " only to give to a Sister." The same Religious having gone to receive it, he said, " Please to open the cloth, and put down on a bit of paper that it is all right." When the cloth was unfolded, a paper was found fastened to the leg of mutton containing a sovereign. Both meat and money were carried to Mother Margaret, who exclaimed with effusion of heart, " How like our good God ! These poor children have procured

us the first offering we have had since we have been here!"

But weeks went by and things appeared no nearer a settlement; the small Community remained alone in their great house, the very quiet and solitude of the situation increasing Mother Margaret's impatience to be at work. "If you want solitude," she writes to Dr. Northcote, "this is the place. You might write a fine book here. You cannot hear a cock crow or an ass bray, not even the whistle of the train." Rural solitude, in fact, was not at all to her taste. Her thoughts were busy in the crowded courts of the metropolis, and unable to enter into the tedious details of the business which had to be gone through, the state of inaction painfully affected her health and spirits. "This is not our work," she would say, "and God will not bless it; souls, souls, that is what we must care for; here we seem only to have trees and shrubs to look at." Moreover, she began for the first time to realise the necessary sacrifice of independence which must follow on her acceptance of Government aid. "I am quite unfit," she writes, "to deal with clever worldly people. I wish they would leave us alone to work in our own way, and not in the way of the Government." On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, however, when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in their little chapel, she had what she called "a joy." "I had one joy yesterday, I nearly went into an ecstasy. We had our Divine Lord quite to ourselves, which I was regretting, when about four o'clock nearly twenty of the boys from the industrial school came in, and sang four or five of Father Faber's hymns. It was just our Lord's own. I was delighted, and when they went away we gave them some biscuits." Her heart warmed towards these poor boys, and she often had them up to work at the convent, and showed them a rather excessive amount of kindness. One lad actually ran away because he had not been chosen for the envied office of

"scrubbing" at the convent. In all Mother Margaret's troubles at this time, one thing cheered her, and it was the hope she entertained of ere long establishing herself at Bow. "That is the place for us," she would say; "it is really a place to save souls in. This place is too grand for us. We want poor children, not trees." And then she would go into the chapel and spend hours before the tabernacle, and would say, "I never prayed so hard as I have done here; I keep saying to Our Lady, *Give me Bow, give me Bow.*" The Religious who were with her at this time also speak of her being in the chapel long before the usual hour in the morning. "At whatever time we might come down," said one, "we were sure to find our Mother there. I believe she spent half the night before our Lord."

She returned to Stone at the end of December, after an absence of nearly two months, to spend the last day of the old year among her children, a year which one of them truly characterised as one "of temporal losses and spiritual gains." Many causes had combined to awaken in the Community a great and general increase of fervour; the recitation of the Divine Office commenced during this year, the unusually valuable retreat which has been already spoken of, together with examples and bereavements which had found their way to many souls. Nor must we fail to notice, among the spiritual graces granted at this time, the effect produced on the Community by the reading of the "Life of Père Lacordaire," by the Rev. Père Chocarne. It went straight to all hearts, producing an effect beyond what is ordinarily produced even by the most powerful retreat. "He *must* have been a saint," said Mother Margaret repeatedly, "for every word of the life goes through one." A translation of the book was made in the Community, and published the following year under the title of "The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire," and many of Mother Margaret's private letters of this date testify

how deeply its contents had stirred her soul to its very depths.

About the same time a correspondence was opened with the Dominican Nuns of the Second Order, established at Mauléon in France, from whom were received copies of their Constitutions and Customary. The latter little volume served as another call to strict observance and a renewal of religious fervour, and on reading it Mother Margaret observed, that "it was like a letter from Almighty God." It was as though, in these and other ways, He was gradually preparing all for coming sorrow; as though, whilst laying the cross on their shoulders, He was at the same time teaching them that in it "is the infusion of heavenly sweetness." Never had the thought of death been brought more near to the hearts of all, and we find Mother Margaret alluding to this in some words addressed to her children on the last day of the old year. She warned them that none could tell if the coming year might not be the last of their lives. "Hardly a year passes," she said, "but God calls one of us to Himself, and we know not whose turn may come next."

Indeed, within the last two years two more of the Community had been taken away by death, concerning both of whom we may say a passing word in this place. Sister Mary Jane Cope had been appointed Prioress of St. Catherine's Convent, Clifton, in November, 1862, an office for which she was eminently fitted from her practical experience and endearing character. In April, 1864, she was obliged to be temporarily relieved from her duties in consequence of the state of her health, and was removed to Stone, in hopes that the alarming symptoms from which she was suffering might be removed with proper treatment. She continued in a very weak state throughout the summer, and on Rosary Monday, which fell that year on the 3rd of October, she was suddenly seized for death, whilst the Community were engaged in reciting the Rosary pro-

cessionally. She had always had a special love to this devotion, and had been for years in the habit of reciting the Fifteen Mysteries daily. Beyond the distress of failing breath, caused by an asthmatic affection under which she laboured, she suffered no pain during her last hours, and remained perfectly calm, conscious, and recollected to the last. She kissed the crucifix again and again, making repeated acts of love and contrition, her countenance expressing the most heartfelt sorrow whenever the last-named acts were recited. When from exhaustion her head wandered a little, she was heard trying to repeat by heart the first Vespers of St. Francis' Feast, murmuring broken fragments of the Psalms, with the Gloria Patri. Mother Margaret was about to say the commendatory prayers for the dying, and asked her if she thought it was time to do so. "No, dear Mother," she replied, in her ordinary tone, "I am not going just yet." About three hours later she gave a sign, and whispered, "It is time now," and before the prayers were finished, she expired. She had always entertained a peculiar respect and affection for the Bishop, and had been accustomed to say she should feel nothing so great a consolation as to have his assistance in the hour of death. And this consolation was granted her, for his Lordship, being most unexpectedly in the convent at the time, assisted her through her last moments, and remained by her until she breathed her last. "Certainly," wrote one of her Sisters, describing her peaceful and most happy end, "this is one more of the blessed deaths we have been privileged to see among us."

The other death which we have to notice was in some respects a remarkable one. The ways of God with souls are indeed wonderful in their variety, and from time to time we turn from the death-bed which closes the pilgrimage of a long life, to one in which the crown seems given before the combat has been waged. And so it was in the case of Sister Mary Gundisalva Matthews. A pupil

in the middle school of Stoke, she had formed the wish of dedicating herself to God in holy religion on the day of her first Communion. On the 3rd of April, 1866, she came to Stone for the purpose of entering the Novitiate, and the following day, not being yet received as a postulant, showed signs of indisposition which appeared of the most trifling description ; but in the night she became so alarmingly ill, that it was judged necessary to give her the last sacraments. Her complaint was declared to be an affection of the heart, hastened and brought to a crisis by emotions of joy, caused by the unexpected consent which had been given to her making trial of her religious vocation. Early on the morning of the 5th, as she had evidently but a few hours to live, she was clothed in the holy habit, and permitted to pronounce her vows, and at eight o'clock the same morning she expired. The words of her confessor, as he witnessed her happy departure, seemed to indicate that it was an answer to her own secret prayer. " That dear child," he said, " has received her heart's desire in every respect."

It cannot be doubted that the close of this year, and the opening of the next, was a period of extraordinary spiritual grace to Mother Margaret, and that her soul was granted some special preparation for the excruciating sufferings which preceded her departure from this life. " Pray for me," she writes, " for lately there has been a great change in my soul, and God seems to require more of me in every way. May He perfect me as He best pleases, and give me humility, love, and (what will you say to my third request ?) *money*, that I may be able to buy souls, to build hospitals, schools, churches,—everything that will win souls to God."

The strong movements of grace of which she was sensible urged her continually to do more and more for God, not merely by undertaking fresh works for His glory and for the salvation of souls, but by the chastening and per-

fecting of her own nature. Her many labours and sufferings, and her advancing years, had in no degree subdued the ardour of that nature, and now it turned against itself, and thirsted with the desire to make war upon itself, and to honour the Passion of Christ by following Him along the thorny track of penance. This desire was so devouring, and so hard to satisfy, that, as one described it who knew it well, it seemed at times as though she would have *slain* herself for love of her suffering Master. No doubt the rules of discretion, as we are wont to account such things, were overpassed, though how far this had any actual share in hastening her last illness is not easy to determine. But looking back now on that history of heroic self-martyrdom, the regrets suggested by the thought that her life may thus have possibly been sacrificed are silenced by the deep conviction that God was overruling all; that having in His infinite love and wisdom prepared the cross on which His servant was to die, He was also preparing her soul to embrace it, and was strengthening her by the practice of penance, that draught of myrrh, for her long and terrible agony.

It is the custom in the Community, on the 1st of January, for the Religious to draw their patron saints for the coming year. On New Year's day, 1867, Mother Margaret drew for her patrons the Martyrs of Gorcum, whose canonisation was fixed to take place in the ensuing June, and the practice annexed ran as follows: "Prove your love of God by your love of suffering." And as she afterwards observed when lying on her sick-bed everything at that time was continually preaching the cross, every book she opened seemed to tell her to prepare for the cross and for suffering, whilst at the same time both her interior trials and her exterior difficulties appeared to increase.

We have said how great a consolation had been afforded her by the appointment of the Rev. Father Procter as

chaplain at St. Mary Church. She felt his presence there a protection to the young and distant Community, and had been gratified by the hopeful terms in which he expressed himself regarding the rising mission in a letter written shortly after Christmas. On the 9th of January, only a few days after the receipt of this letter, the melancholy news was received by telegram of the sudden death of the writer, which had taken place at St. Mary Church on the day previous. The telegram arrived in the evening, and early next morning Mother Margaret set out for Devonshire, performing the long journey in a single day. She found the Community in sad trouble. The venerable Father had shown no signs of indisposition until the very day before his death. Though feeling unwell, he said Mass on Tuesday morning, in order not to disappoint the Religious of Holy Communion, and then found himself obliged to keep his room; but the medical man who attended him saw no cause for alarm. Father Procter, however, confessed himself unable to say his Office, remarking, when obliged to give up the attempt, that it was the first time in his life he had ever failed to recite it. Two Religious were in attendance on him, when they saw a sudden change pass over his features, and in a moment he had expired. He had no agony, but died without a struggle, sitting in his chair.

This was a sad blow, and seemed to threaten a severe check to the work which this good pastor had so solidly begun. Intimation of the event was at once forwarded to Woodchester, and until the arrival of some of the Dominican Fathers, the Religious watched by the body day and night, reciting the Psalter according to the custom of the Order on the decease of one of its members. On the arrival of the Fathers the Requiem Mass was sung in the little chapel of the Community, and was attended by a considerable number of persons, whose sobs were audible throughout the ceremony. Mother Margaret directed that

every mark of respect should be paid which circumstances would allow, and when the men came to bear the body to the hearse, all the Religious assembled with cross and candles to escort it to the convent door. "The dear remains have just gone," she writes, "and we are left here desolate enough as regards ourselves, but for him it must be bliss indeed. He looked like a saint, quite unchanged since his death, but only looking more calm each day. It is truly a hard cross for our Sisters and for me, for we know not what to do, and we shall not easily find his like again." To the Religious at St. Mary Church she often spoke, urging them to pray, not only for their own pressing need of a holy priest who might replace him who was gone, but also for the multiplication of many such in the Church. "Pray, pray," she would say; "forget yourselves utterly. If the whole world were to die we should still have God: but pray all day as you go about your work that He may send more of these virgin souls, who present God to the people and keep themselves out of sight. Pray, then, for holy priests, men of prayer, men who may rouse up and convert this dull, hard nation."

On the 21st of January she returned to Stone, where she soon afterwards made a private Retreat of eight days. She appeared to be moved by an urgent and unusual longing for this period of prayer and solitude, as she said, in order to prepare herself for death. Most of her children were far from entertaining any apprehensions that the need for such a time of preparation was indeed so close at hand; but a few, who watched her more closely, were filled with sad misgivings as they beheld a change in her appearance, which indicated more than passing indisposition. Yet, in spite of her increasing infirmity, she not only gave herself no relaxation, but imposed on herself many acts of penance, for which her strength was quite unequal. Even the ordinary prostrations and *venias*, which occur in the daily ceremonies of the choir, could not be performed by her

without great physical pain and exhaustion, yet to the last she persisted in all these observances. Nor was this all ; during her Retreat, which every one remarked to have been a season of profound and extraordinary recollection, she solicited and obtained permission to make a general confession of her whole life to her ordinary confessor ; and those only who are aware of the anguish which any exercise of self-introspection occasioned her, can appreciate the distress to which she thus voluntarily submitted for her own greater humiliation.

Mind and body were thus alike being subjected to a keen and searching mortification ; nor was it possible that nature should be so roughly dealt with, without injury to the physical frame.

Meanwhile the arrangements connected with the reception of the orphans at Walthamstow were beginning to cause many harassing anxieties.

Mother Margaret had by this time become fully aware of the various liabilities incurred by her acceptance of this work, and a correspondence was opened with his Grace the Archbishop for the purpose of explaining her difficulties. To use her own expression, she felt, that when in connection with Government, she should be like Samson when shorn of his hair, deprived of all her strength. The strong repugnances she had all her life entertained on this subject have elsewhere been spoken of ; and she felt miserable at the thought of leaving her children entangled in the very system from which she had constantly struggled to keep free. As soon as his Grace became aware of her feelings, he most kindly consented to set her free from the engagement into which she had entered without a sufficient comprehension of the conditions involved ; at the same time expressing the pleasure it would give him to see the Community established in any other part of his diocese, to undertake any good work they might feel more

suitable. He only requested that the Sisters would remain at Walthamstow until he was in a position to place the house in other hands.

Mother Margaret's joy at finding herself free from the burden, which had weighed on her in so distressing a manner, was unbounded. "Truly," she observed, "Almighty God does bring us out of our difficulties in a wonderful manner. He knows our simplicity of intention, and that we only sought to serve Him. He brings down to the grave, and makes alive again;" and a large candle of thanksgiving was immediately lighted before Our Lady's image. On the 19th of March she left Stone for Walthamstow, where she remained nearly seven weeks. Never before had her absence been so prolonged, and the time seemed the longer and the sadder from the lingering illness of one Religious, and the death of another, Sister Mary Mancini Morris, who departed on the 8th of April, on which day was kept the transferred Feast of the Most Precious Blood. She had always cherished a great devotion to this sacred mystery, and had often, during her last illness, been heard saying to herself, that she felt the Precious Blood being poured over her. She expired very peacefully, whilst the Mass of the Precious Blood was being said for her, breathing her last exactly as it was concluded.

Among the other providential ways by which our Lord seemed to be preparing the Community for the affliction which was soon to come upon them, must be noticed the circumstance, accidental as it seemed, but hitherto unprecedented, of Mother Margaret's absence from Stone at all the greater festivals. She had generally made it a law to herself to be present in the Novitiate-House on all these occasions, and how great was the animation and fervour which her presence at such times inspired! But the Forty Hours, and the Christmas Festival, and now also Lent, and Passiontide, and Easter, were all to go by,

and her place in the midst of her children still remained empty. It was a privation they felt in a sensible manner, yet, as they afterwards acknowledged, it was a merciful weaning, and accustomed them by gradual steps to the greater sacrifice which was yet to be made. Though absent in person, she was present by letter, and at no period of her life is her correspondence so full as during the last weeks of her residence at Walthamstow. And still through all of them runs one unvarying note : *the Cross, the Cross !* " It is a painful, anxious life," she writes ; " and if our dear Lord did not sustain me with His all-powerful hand, I should sink under it. . . . God is truly founding us in the Cross. . . . He has blessed us with many crosses this year ; may He be blessed for ever ! . . . We are children of the Cross, conceived and born at the foot of the Cross, servants of the Cross by our own free choice. We have chosen it for our inheritance, so we must bear it willingly and cheerfully. Pray for our work here : it is not yet begun, as we cannot get the children. The evil one is very busy, and, like all God's works, it is marked with the Cross ; but that, no doubt, is its best security." Her Lenten letters were full of exhortations to fervour, penance, and increased devotion to the Passion of Christ. " Here, at Walthamstow," she says, " we have to be content without any outward helps ; but our God is with us in the tabernacle, and if we meditate on His Blessed Passion, we need nothing else. Let us think *in our hearts*, that is the sermon of sermons for one and all. As Lent is near its end, I hope you will all do your best, in some way, to honour the Passion of Christ." Another subject which furnishes the theme of many letters, is her anxiety to secure the observance of the Rule and Constitutions " to the letter." " Let us have but one aim," she writes, " to bring our Order and Rule to perfection. There are many things to bring right ; but if we bring ourselves under subjection by penance, it will soften the soul to receive grace.

. . . The only wish I have to live is to see the Rule and Constitutions kept *to the letter*. . . . Be faithful to grace, and pray that we may be *really and truly* Dominicans : if we are we shall be saints. It makes me truly happy that we keep all the practices of the Order. In the world, penance is a dead letter : not one person that I have seen keeps the Fasts of the Church. Thank God all here keep the fast."

On this subject, Mother Margaret's teaching agreed with that of blessed Henry Suso, that " he who seeks with tender treatment to get better of a refractory body, wants common sense." Nor was she any stranger to that other beautiful saying of the same saint, that " there is no wooer, but he is a sufferer; no lover, but he is a martyr; therefore it must needs be that he who aims at lofty love should meet with some things repugnant to him."

Those who were with her at Walthamstow, at this time, will remember that it was by example, even more than by words, that she exhorted her children to penance and self-humiliation ; and they will recall many circumstances which prove how severe a mental struggle was, at the same time, going on within her soul, which often manifested itself by unusual signs of disturbance and distress. When Holy Week came, the accustomed ceremonies were all performed as exactly as circumstances would allow ; and on Holy Thursday, Mother Margaret herself prepared a beautiful sepulchre within a recess in their little chapel. At the same time she addressed the following letter to her absent children at Stone :—

" St. Mary's, Walthamstow,
April 15, 1867.

" My very dear Children in Jesus,—We are now at the end of the Penitential season, and about to celebrate the great Mystery of Love, and the great work of our Redemption. Let us then, with grateful hearts, bless our

good, our loving God for His wonderful mercies to us. Comprehend it we cannot; our hearts are too small, too narrow, too much in love with self to feel the condescending love of a God towards His creatures; but let us do our little with a generous heart, and that will please this loving Father whose heart is more tender than the fondest mother, to see His children trying (as far as their weak nature will permit) to make some return for so much love. It has been a comfort and help to me to look round at all my very dear Sisters doing their best to keep the abstinence and fasting, for I believe, from what I hear and see, that there are few who do. This must humble, not elate us, for a loving soul must feel the tepid, relaxed state of the Christian world. I have not seen one person that keeps the fast, and have heard bishops complain that even now[1] no one attends to the commands of the Church. We are none the worse for what we have done, and our souls must be in a far more spiritual state to speak to God. Oh, how good He is to separate us from this cold, heartless world, and put us where, if we slacken and grow tepid, we are pushed on by our Rule, and by the example of the spouses of Jesus, with whom we live, and by our Superiors. Blessed for ever be such providing love, that has done all this for us! Pray much, my dear Sisters, when before our dear Lord, for this foundation. It is truly the foundation of the Cross, and a cross of which we do not see the end. The price of a soul is not thought of by the world; nor is the Passion and Death of our dear Lord of any weight or consideration. It is a thing unknown, and never spoken of. The very day of His most bitter death will only be marked by excess in eating and drinking.[2] Surely God must be preparing vengeance for such base ingratitude.

[1] i.e., since the new dispensations recently granted.

[2] If to any this reads like exaggeration, it must suffice to say that it was strictly true. On the Good Friday of this year the neighbourhood of Walthamstow was full of pleasure parties, who came down from London in vans to celebrate the day by feasting and holiday making.

His testament of love, in which He gives us all He is and all He has, is unknown by most, and reviled by many. His spouses, then, must comfort, console, and make reparation to His sacred loving Heart for all these outrages committed against Him. Oh bless, love, adore, and be foolish with love for Him who would endure all this for the love of us! We can each say, It was for *me!* it was for me that God suffered! Would that I could print in all your hearts, my very dear children, a continual remembrance of the sufferings of our Jesus, not to make you sad, but to make you perfect in His holy love! Cease not with the glorious resurrection to think and meditate on what was the purchase of it. Let us only with life cease to show our gratitude for such unheard-of sufferings for things so vile. May the sufferings of your Divine Spouse obtain for you all the glorious resurrection you aspire to, is the constant prayer of your devoted Mother in Jesus,

MARGARET,
Of the Mother of God."

Towards the close of April negotiations were opened for the purchase of a piece of ground at Bow, and their favourable issue formed the principal intention in the devotions offered during the month of May. Mother Margaret had never testified the same ardent desire concerning any of her former foundations, but her whole heart seemed bent on this, and again we find her writing that she can do nothing but go about asking Our Lady to give her Bow. She returned from Walthamstow to Stone on the 3rd of May, and the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary began to be recited, going processionally in the early mornings to the Chapel of Our Lady of Victories. On the 11th of May, Mother Margaret proceeded to Clifton, where another trial awaited her in the illness of Mother Rose Columba Adams, who had to undergo a painful surgical operation. Only those who were familiar with Mother Margaret's

extreme tenderness of heart, and her peculiar dread of surgical treatment, can realise the distress and anguish which she underwent on this occasion. When she reached St. Mary Church a few days later, the traces of what she had gone through were plainly discernible on her countenance, and indeed at this time her own health was beginning visibly to fail, and her children were in constant dread of a recurrence of the dangerous malady which had attacked her in the previous spring. At St. Mary Church she received one great and unexpected consolation. The generous benefactor already named made known his intention of building the church to be attached to the future convent, and this welcome intelligence was communicated to her on the Feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, under which title the Convent of St. Mary Church is dedicated. But as weeks and months went on, they continued to accumulate the same associations of suffering and death. Letters from Stone brought the intelligence of three deaths in one day, namely, of a patient in the hospital, of a relative of one of the Religious, and of a lady under their care, who had died suddenly. Stopping at Clifton on her homeward journey, Mother Margaret paid a farewell visit to her esteemed friend, Mr. Hardman of Birmingham, whose death took place the following day, being the eve of the Feast of the Ascension. It was a visit which deeply touched and edified her, and drew from her the expression that it was like beholding a dying saint. But the many emotions she underwent during this short period greatly shook her failing strength, and on reaching Stone her appearance indicated an unusual amount of suffering and exhaustion. The 1st of June brought tidings of another death, and this time of a Protestant friend,who by many acts of generosity and kindness had entitled himself to be regarded as a benefactor, and had won many a grateful prayer from the Community,who had ever cherished hopes of his ultimate conversion. On the eve of Corpus Christi, which that year

fell on the 20th of June, Mother Margaret found herself obliged to keep her room, and to her great regret was unable to take part in the preparations for the coming feast. The illness of one of her Religious at the same time caused her much distress, and increased her own indisposition, so that when Sunday came, on which day the great procession is annually made at Stone, Mother Margaret could only watch it from her window, and her absence on such an occasion was sorrowfully felt by her children.

It was about this time that she was one day seized with a sharp pain in the left side, which seemed to transfix her; and though the acute paroxysm was for the moment relieved, yet the pain in the back and side never afterwards left her, and were alleviated by no remedies. It was, in fact, the beginning of her fatal malady, and during the remainder of the summer her health continued visibly to give way. Yet she seemed more than usually unwilling to allow herself any relaxation, and insisted on going on with all her duties as if nothing were the matter. This gave rise to most painful anxiety on the part of those about her, but to their earnest entreaties that she would take greater care of her health, and have medical advice, she only replied by assuring them that if once she got into the doctors' hands she should never get out again, and went on as before.

By the beginning of October, however, she became so seriously ill as to be obliged to remove to the infirmary and submit to medical treatment; and during the Rosary Week, the whole Rosary was offered daily for her recovery. On Rosary Sunday intelligence was received that arrangements had at last been made which would enable the Community at Walthamstow to remove thence to Bow. As possession had not yet been obtained of the house purchased in the latter place, it was resolved to rent another, and to lose no time in establishing the Religious in this temporary dwelling. A small house was accord-

ingly hired, and this first step towards the foundation at Bow filled Mother Margaret with such delight that it quite revived her. " I do not feel a pain," she said, "when I think of Bow. It is a place after my own heart ; and as to the rent of the house, the blessed Virgin will be sure to pay it." It was a few days after this, on the 16th of October, that the " pilgrimage " from Stoke took place, of which mention has been made in a former chapter ; Mother Margaret watched the children walking in procession round the garden, as they left the chapel of Our Lady of Victories, and the spectacle quite overcame her. " Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," she said, " Thou hast perfected praise ; " and she dwelt on the hope that a great devotion to our Lady of Victories would spread from this beginning.

On the 22nd of October she left Stone for London, for the purpose of personally superintending the removal of the Sisters from Walthamstow, and their establishment at Bow. At the time when she undertook this painful journey, she was struggling with severe illness, and was in reality fit only for a sick-bed. The transfer of the little Community from Walthamstow to the hired house in Clarendon Terrace was accomplished three days later ; and the little chapel having been got ready, Mass was said in it for the first time, by one of the Dominican Fathers from Haverstock Hill, on Sunday the 27th. On this day, then, may be said to have commenced the foundation at Bow, Mother Margaret's last work on earth, on which some special blessing must surely rest, established and cemented as it had been in the Cross.

Her state of suffering, increased by the fatigues unavoidable at such a time, had now attained a height which rendered it a matter of doubt how she would be able to bear the homeward journey. At this time she could not walk upstairs without support, and those who sat near her at table could hear the suppressed groans of pain caused

by the exertion of descending to the little room used as a refectory. Although she acknowledged that rest and warmth were the only things which gave her any relief, she resisted every persuasion to allow herself longer rest in the morning, and spoke of her intention of visiting the convents of Clifton and St. Mary Church immediately after her return to Stone. She felt a long illness approaching, and was most anxious to pay a farewell visit to each of her houses, although those around her felt too sure that this could never be accomplished. In fact, they dreaded lest the progress of her malady should prevent the possibility of her returning to Stone. But she revived sufficiently to make the attempt, and reached Stone on the 30th, bringing with her a most precious relic, which had been presented to the Community by J. V. Harting, Esq., namely, the incorrupt hand of St. Etheldreda, the abbess and foundress of Ely. In spite of her pain and weakness Mother Margaret's heart was occupied with sanguine hopes regarding her new foundation. "I never felt such trust as now," she said, "that God would help us. If I had the money, I would build a beautiful church at Bow directly. It is Our Lady's own place." And on the Feast of All Saints, when she saw the church at Stone decked for that great solemnity, she repeated more than once that it was like heaven, and that a church like that at Bow would convert thousands.[1]

On the 5th of November she assisted at the clothing of two novices, Sister Jane Margaret Ryley and Sister M. Alexis Woodward, the last ceremony of the kind at which

[1] For over fifty years the Sisters worked at Bow, teaching in Schools, visiting the poor and sick, and employing their energies in other activities for the good of souls, thus endeavouring to carry out Mother Margaret's ardent desires. Difficulties arising from post-war high cost of keeping up a large establishment, and scarcity of trained subjects to supply staff for the Schools, obliged Superiors, with the consent of Cardinal Bourne, to withdraw from Bow in 1922, to their own regret as well as to that of the people among whom the Sisters had lived and worked for so many years."

she was ever to be present. She went through it with difficulty, owing to the intense pain she was then enduring. That day arrived the news of the victory of Mentana, intelligence which moved Mother Margaret's deepest sympathies, and drew from her repeated acts of thanksgiving to God for the protection so providentially granted to Rome and the Holy Father. But by this time she was obliged to own herself unable to stand erect, and at the urgent solicitation of the Bishop and of the Community, she consented to give herself a fortnight's entire rest. On the 7th of November, therefore, she took to her bed, and from that couch of excruciating suffering she was never destined to rise again.

CHAPTER XV

1867, 1868

THE life which we have been engaged in tracing through its sixty-six years of loving labour has reached its closing chapter, and all that remains is to relate its end. "The setting sun of such a life," writes one of Mother Margaret's children, "was too beautiful and striking to be compared to anything;" and yet, beautiful as it was, to describe it is no easy task. For while, on the one hand, the memory is still fresh of those prolonged and intense sufferings which pierced the hearts of those who watched them with the sword of compassion, we cannot forget, on the other hand, that suffering and death are matters with which the world is too familiar for us to demand its sympathy on that account as for something rare and extraordinary. But yet again, neither can we forget that it is death which stamps its final character upon a life, and that such a history as we have been relating receives a certain authentication from its last seal of suffering. For we have been claiming for this soul some special spiritual endowments; we have been speaking of her as a great and highly-favoured servant of God; we have, almost unconsciously to ourselves, been drawing a parallel between her gifts, her spirit, and her work, and those of St. Catherine of Siena; and it is fitting, therefore, to set forth the last point in which that parallel held good, namely, in that death of agony which it may be believed is granted by our Lord to His favoured ones, in

order the more closely to conform it to the likeness of His own.

The fortnight of rest which Mother Margaret would have fain believed was all she required passed away, and found her at its close entirely helpless to rise. She had, in point of fact, used up her physical powers to their last fibre in the struggle she had maintained for so many months with infirmity and disease. The suffering she had endured on former occasions from attacks on the spine had always inspired her with a great dread of a recurrence of this malady. "Do pray," she would say to those around her, "that I may not have one of those attacks in the back when I am dying; I fear I should die in despair." In reality the disease had always remained latent in the spine, and the excessive exertions of the last two years would seem to have roused it to activity. Only four days after she had taken to her bed the bursting of a large lumbar abscess seemed to declare the nature of the complaint, and to afford an explanation of the pain that had gone before. Sanguine hopes were therefore entertained that the malady might have reached a favourable crisis, which would be followed by a recovery of strength; and on the same day being the Feast of Our Lady's Patronage, the devotion of the Fifteen Rosaries was begun; his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne likewise commencing a Novena of Masses in union with the intentions of the Community. The temporary relief afforded by keeping a recumbent position, restored to her countenance for a time its natural expression of health. Her mind continued strong and vigorous; and for the first month of her illness she governed the Congregation as fully as ever, through the voice and pen of another. Indeed, up to the beginning of January, she continued to regulate all the affairs of the Congregation, and the unimpaired activity of her mental faculties sustained her children's hopes that her malady was only a local one, which would not affect her general health.

These hopes were further encouraged by a very slight improvement which appeared to follow on the application of the hand of St. Etheldreda to the part affected; but Mother Margaret herself knew better, and constantly repeated that "there was more to come." On the Feast of Our Lady's Presentation (Nov. 21) the children of the schools, as usual, renewed their baptismal vows, and paid a visit to Our Lady of Victories to pray for her recovery. She was greatly overcome when she heard of the many prayers offered for her by these innocent children, repeating again and again the words *Domine non sum dignus;* and quoting an anecdote, which had often touched her, of the celebrated Gerson, who, as he lay on his death-bed, caused all the little children whom he had taught to be admitted to his room, that they might assist him in his last struggle by their innocent prayers, saying, that for their sakes he hoped God would have mercy on the sinner, John Gerson.

By the end of the month the pain had become more acute, and those who had hitherto cherished the most confident hopes began to see that her illness, under its most favourable aspect, must be long and tedious, and that there was a manifest loss of strength and power, which increased from day to day. On Advent Sunday, which fell on the 1st of December, commenced a Triduo for the Holy Father, which had been ordered to be made throughout the diocese, and of which we have elsewhere spoken. It did not interfere with the celebration of the Forty Hours, which commenced as usual on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Mother Margaret, who up to this time occupied a room on the ground-floor, had to the last indulged the hope that she might be wheeled on her sofa to the church, and might thus be able to satisfy her devotion. She had directed certain alterations to be made in the usual decorations, and for some days beforehand spoke of her coming visit to the church, and of

the pleasure she anticipated in once more beholding the beauty of the sanctuary. But when the feast came, the attempt proved altogether impossible. The usual procession at the beginning of the devotion was this year made round the cloisters, passing by the door of the room which Mother Margaret occupied. The sound of the bell indicating the near approach of the Blessed Sacrament, quite overcame her, and, to use her own expression, she cried, like the blind man in the Gospel who sat by the wayside as our Lord passed along, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Her favourite image of the Blessed Virgin was brought to her on this feast. She kissed it fondly, saying in that familiar language which she always used in addressing Our Lady, "Dearest Mother, if you'll only make me well, I'll build you a church at Bow,—such a beautiful church it shall be!" In fact, her mind was constantly occupied with the thought of Bow. She used to say again and again how she longed to be at Bow, and how much she hoped to be there once more before Christmas. At this time the little Community attached to the new foundation was suffering from many discomforts. Sister M. Winifred Dawes and Sister Dominic Belton were still in charge of the house at Walthamstow, where their position was somewhat desolate. Mother Margaret often spoke of "those poor children," and desired a little present might be sent them to cheer them up, and help them to keep the feast. At last, on the 12th of December, they were able to join the other Religious at Bow, to the great joy of all concerned.

At this period of her illness Mother Margaret was suffering not merely from bodily pain, but from extreme desolation of soul. "I could bear all the rest," she sometimes said, "if it were not for this. Even Our Lady seems to have forgotten me;" and she would add, with tears, "God has done so much for me, and I have done nothing for Him in return." At other times she said, "I dread look-

ing forward, it seems all such a dark void. How often I think of our Lord's agony in the garden, and use His words! I have never once asked absolutely to get well, only that God's will may be done. It seems such a long, dreary prospect, *but I shall coax our Lord to make it short!* If only I *knew* that I should be saved!" And this fear regarding her ultimate salvation caused her a severe interior trial. Almost from the beginning of her illness, the chaplain of the convent visited her daily, read the Gospel over her, and gave her the blessing for the sick of our holy Father St. Dominic; nor would she ever compose herself for the night till she had those "beautiful blessings," as she called them. She had a great dread lest, in her intense sufferings, she should be guilty of any impatience, and would sometimes address the chaplain, saying, "It is not impatience, is it, my rolling thus from side to side in my pain? Does it take away the merit?" To her energetic mind the long inaction was itself a severe penance. "If it were our Lord's will to raise me up, and let me work again," she one day said, "I should be glad; but if I am not to recover, I would much rather He took me to Himself, than let me lie here like an animal, eating and drinking, and thinking of nothing but the body. But when I say this, I always add at the end of it, 'God's will be done!' I am only telling you the thoughts that pass through my mind." In fact, her most plaintive words were ever mingled with expressions of entire abandonment to the will of God, and, to use the words of the Religious who was constantly at her side, "her acts of resignation were unceasing, mingled with prayers to endure to the end, without offending God."

On the 21st of December, Mass began for the first time to be said once a week in her sick-room, this special privilege being granted her through the kind consideration of Bishop Ullathorne. She was overcome with joy and gratitude when she heard of his Lordship's permission for

so great a favour, and burst into tears when she tried to express her happiness. "It is not because I am unhappy that I cry," she said, "but because God is so good. I am ashamed of what He does for me; it is too much for a *beggar-woman* like me!" This expression she often repeated during her illness, and particularly when anything fresh was done with a view of alleviating her sufferings. When first moved on to a spring-bed, she exclaimed, "A *beggar-woman* like me, who ought to be in the union, to have such indulgences!" "We hardly ever helped her into bed," writes one of her faithful attendants, "without hearing her say, when she felt the relief of lying down, 'Oh, thank God, how good He is to give us a bed!'"

As Christmas drew near, the Christmas she had fondly hoped she should spend at Bow, every day brought a great increase of pain and loss of power. A Novena for her recovery was offered at this time to St. Germaine Cousin, and a relic of the saint applied to the suffering back, but with no favourable results. Her mind, however, was still firm and vigorous, and capable of attending to practical business, and with the slightest lull of pain her voice regained its usual cheerful tones. It was truly a sorrowful festival to the Religious; yet Mother Margaret desired that everything should be regulated as at other times, and that none of the usual recreations and amusements provided for the children or hospital patients should be omitted on her account. Her children complied with her wishes, though it was with heavy hearts. One happiness, however, was granted at this time, the remembrance of which remains closely associated with that of her own sufferings. It was the return to the Church of one in whom she was deeply interested, and for whom many prayers had been offered in the Congregation, and none who witnessed it will easily forget the effusion of heart with which she received the intelligence, and hastened to communicate it to those who she knew would regard it with a kindred

interest. Pain and sorrow were for a brief space forgotten in that deep joy ;—" the last of our joys," writes one, " that we were, for a long while, to taste." On Christmas Day Mass was said in her room, and though very weak and exhausted, she that day experienced a little relief from the pain. The following day his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne arrived at Stone, and on the next morning he said Mass in the sick-chamber. Mother Margaret knew not how to express her emotions of gratitude. " You can never tell," she said,—" you cannot think, what it is to me to have Mass in my room. It goes through me to think of the goodness of God. He gives so much in return for so very little. Think of His coming to me Himself ! "

And truly it may be said that God indeed gave much in return for all that during life she had given to Him. The words had ever been on her lips that " He was a *grateful* lover," and that " He was never to be outdone in generosity,"and on her sick-bed she experienced their truth. He gave the Cross indeed, but with the Cross He poured out a profusion of spiritual blessings and privileges, the " good measure pressed down and running over," which He ever seems to delight in bestowing on those who are generous towards Him. The reader may perhaps recall one incident of Mother Margaret's early life, when, having been left a legacy of considerable amount, she expended the whole sum in Masses for the soul of her deceased benefactor. Those Masses were repaid with interest. During her six months' illness, no fewer than eleven Novenas of Masses were either offered spontaneously, or procured by friends. Seventeen other Novenas of Masses were at various times procured by the Community to be offered for her, of which some were said in England, and others at Notre Dame des Victoires in Paris, at Our Lady of Asse-broeck, at Loretto, and other holy places. Besides these Novenas, she had the unspeakable consolation and support afforded by a multitude of other Masses offered for

her almost daily. Three priests,[1] with extraordinary charity, persevered during the whole of her illness in giving her almost every one of their Masses not otherwise appropriated by obligation. Some offered the Holy Sacrifice for her every other day, others again, every week; and on examining the list preserved of these benefactions, we arrive at the astonishing conclusion that during the last six months of her life she must have had as many as a thousand Masses offered for her intention, a very large proportion of which were said gratuitously. An old priest, who was unable through infirmity to say Mass, sent her a message saying that he never thought of her without blessing her in his heart.

To these must be added the innumerable and unceasing Rosaries, Novenas, and other devotions offered for her recovery in all the houses of the Congregation, as well as those which were a voluntary tribute of affection from the children in the schools, and the patients in the hospital. It was observed throughout her illness that she appeared to suffer less by night than by day. "We can only attribute this," writes one Religious in a journal kept during the time, "to our little children, about one hundred and thirty of whom, at our different houses, say a Hail Mary for her with their night prayers, that she may have an easy night." Thus, a strong uninterrupted tide of prayer was continually going up before God; and who can doubt that it was heard and answered, if not by procuring her recovery, at least by impetrating for her the extraordinary graces which she needed during her long and terrible purgation?

And thus the year 1867 came to a close. On the first day of the New Year, the ceremony of drawing the Patron Saints took place as usual. The augury of suffering of the previous year had been only too faithfully fulfilled,

[1] The Very Rev. Dr. Northcote the Rev. Father Morris of the London Oratory, and the Rev. Father Hyacinth Arden, O.P.

and a sharp pang shot through many hearts when the Religious who drew the card for our Mother read out with a faltering voice the name of *St. Barbara*, with the accompanying practice *to pray for a happy death*. She was at this time suffering from intense spiritual desolation, a trial harder to bear than any amount of physical suffering. And she appeared to be for the first time realising to herself, to its full extent, the gravity of her illness, and often referred with a kind of anguish to the probability of her having before her long years of helpless suffering. Unfailing and heroic as was her resignation to the will of God, such a prospect was terrible to nature. Nor was she able, God so permitting it, to derive consolation from the words of those around her, and the depth of interior suffering caused by that sense of *fear* to which she had all her life been subject, was manifested by the frequent repetition of the simple and touching words, " I am so frightened ! " Her establishment in the room on the ground-floor which she had hitherto occupied, had been arranged under the idea that her imprisonment would be of short duration, and that she would be less separated from the Community than if removed upstairs. But as all hopes of a speedy cure were now relinquished, she began to feel a scruple at not being in the infirmary, and became so desirous of removing thither, that though fearful of the risk, her children could not refuse her. The room she had hitherto occupied downstairs was that which she ordinarily used as a private sitting-room, and her departure from it was like a melancholy leave-taking. She seemed herself aware that she was never to return, or to resume her accustomed duties. Before leaving, she caused all the drawers and cupboards to be emptied, distributing the contents to different Sisters, to take charge of according to their various offices. " It was like a death," says one, " and nearly broke our hearts."

An arm-chair was prepared in such a way as to admit

of her reclining backwards, for she was unable to bear the least approach to an erect posture, and on the 7th of January she was, with extreme difficulty, conveyed upstairs to the infirmary. The transit was happily accomplished without accident, but on the 28th of the same month it was found necessary to remove her once more to a larger room near the infirmary, which she never left again. This second removal was, if possible, a yet more affecting scene than the first had been. She was carried on a couch surrounded by many of her weeping children, some of whom were forcibly reminded of that passage in the life of our holy Father St. Dominic, which represents him in his last sickness carried to his convent over the fields and vineyards by his afflicted brethren, " weeping as they went."

In spite of the steady and manifest progress of her malady, its precise nature remained to the last so obscure as to baffle the skill of the four medical men who were, at different times, in attendance upon her. The seat, however, was evidently in the spine,[1] and she often said that her back was breaking. When some of those around her, touched with compassion, gave utterance to the wish that they could share her sufferings, or suffer in her room, " Oh, no ! " she would reply, " I should not like any of you to suffer. I would not wish my worst enemy to have *a bad back.* I hope no one else will ever have it." Her thoughts were as much for others as for herself. " Don't come too near me when I am so suffering," she would say " it will make you so miserable." In the midst of the most excruciating pain, her countenance remained singularly tranquil ; the features were not drawn or contracted, so that a casual observer would hardly have detected any

[1] The disease was pronounced at first to be decay of one of the spinal bones, though its after progress caused some of the medical attendants to doubt if it were so or not. To the last the real nature of the malady remained obscure, but it was evidently connected with the life-long affection of the spine from which she had always suffered.

change. Yet she described herself at this time as "lying on a bed of fire." "I am a soul in purgatory," she said. "May God help and sustain me! My patience depends more on others than myself. It is your prayers that keep me up; my own are worth nothing;" and to all who visited her she addressed the most earnest and touching entreaties that they would *pray*, *pray*, *pray*, that she might "persevere to the end, and not lose patience." Two things chiefly impressed those who watched by her side during these months of ever-increasing agony. The first was that character of *simplicity* which was stamped on every word. It had ever during life been the most attractive side of her character, but now it became veritably child-like. "The last time she was ever moved from her bed to the sofa," writes one of her devoted nurses, "she expressed a great wish to die, and said, 'Oh, when will our Lord come for me! How long I have to wait, and then I get so frightened of losing patience, and losing Him.' She was reminded that God sent these great crosses as a sign of His love. 'Ah, that was to the saints,' she replied; 'but they were patient. They did not call out as I do;' and then, in the midst of her sobs and tears, she broke out into exclamations, saying, 'But I *do* love Him! He knows I love Him! O Love, I *do* love Thee! I love nobody but Thee!' She often repeated that she was a sinner, suffering for her 'great, great sins.' Her most frequent ejaculations were, 'Thy will be done!' and 'My God and my all!' and she used to tell us that those words were her Litany. Sometimes we heard her saying half aloud, 'A little ease, dear Jesus! a little ease! My Lord and my God, I unite all my sufferings to those of Thy Divine Son;' or again, 'My sweet Mother Mary, my Divine Mother, my more than Mother, pray for me!' One of her most frequent ejaculations was the versicle at Prime, '*Jesu Christe, Fili Dei vivi, miserere mei*,' to which she always had a great devotion. One day she asked what

bell that was she heard, and being told it was the second bell for office, 'Ah!' she said, 'how nice it would be if it were *the second bell to go to heaven!*[1]—to go to God!' The Sister to whom she spoke observed that then there would be no more pain. 'No more *fear*,' she replied, quickly; 'no fear of losing Him, that is the thing!'" "She was grateful for everything that was done for her," writes another, "and as simple as a child, but the simplicity was of a kind that constantly excited your reverence. She blessed God's goodness for everything which we gave her. If we gave her part of an orange, she would say, 'How good of God to make this orange for me! I have everything He can give. He has given me all of you to wait on me. How good He is!'" Another time, when a Sister gave her a glass of water, she heard her murmur, "From His blessed Hands!" and the same Sister observes, "What most struck me in her illness, was that she was so exactly the same as when in health." This latter remark would be corroborated by all who visited her during her sickness. Some, perhaps, were even sensible of a certain feeling of disappointment, when, on obtaining admission to the sick-chamber, the few moments of those precious interviews passed in ordinary conversation, and they would come away without having being able to lay up in their mind one word of more than common interest. This not only arose from that habitual simplicity of character which led Mother Margaret to avoid the least approach to what was strained or affected, but might also perhaps be attributed to a deeper motive. No one could fail to remark the studied manner in which she sought to teach and to practise detachment, and this was the second feature of her illness to which we referred above. Far

[1] The speaker was using the familiar language so natural to her, unconscious of the resemblance it bore to the words of the poet Moore:—

> "*When will heaven, its sweet bell ringing,*
> Call my spirit to the fields above?"

from seeking to fix the thoughts of those around her on herself, to make claims on their sympathy, or to cherish that clinging of children to their dying Mother, which would seem to some too natural to reprove, it was apparent to all that in a thousand nameless ways she was striving to loosen the tie, and to prevent the hearts of any from being absorbed in herself. She therefore spoke little to those who came to her. She gave them no last words, no moving exhortations. She said little or nothing to excite their interest or their admiration, or if on a few rare occasions she spoke a word of parting advice, it was always to urge them to greater detachment. "Have courage, child," she said to one who was in great affliction at the thought of losing her; "have only God for your object, and all will be well. Work for God. Don't mind anything else, and all will come right." Detachment was the one lesson she preached on her bed of suffering. "I have been thinking the last day or two," she said to one of her attendants, "that our Lord has sent me this illness because you are all too much attached to me. It has been 'our Mother this,' and 'our Mother that,' and now you see what sort of a Mother you have got. He did not make your hearts for creatures. He made them for Himself." Speaking in the same strain to another Sister, she said, "Perhaps I am suffering on account of the excessive attachment of some of the Religious to me. Not that I ever sought to win the affections of one of you. I never did that. But there certainly has been a singular unity of love amongst us. I never sought it. I have not that to reproach myself with; infidelity to grace, that I have." Every one observed how strict was the guard she kept over herself in this matter, not certainly from any want of natural tenderness, for she owned to one who shared her closest confidence, that it cost her no slight effort to avoid exciting the sympathy of the Sisters. She was afraid of her own natural feelings, no less than of theirs; and when

giving leave for any Sister to visit her, would bid her be told that "she must not cry." The Religious in attendance on her did their best to preserve the same kind of self-command, but if nature sometimes claimed its rights, Mother Margaret would say, in a tone of tender reproach, "That does not make me happier;" so that all endeavoured to put a strong constraint on their feelings, and to appear firm and cheerful in her presence. "As her illness progressed," says one, "she positively effaced herself. She would hardly give a blessing, or promise to pray for us." One who had shared all her labours in the government of the Congregation ventured once to try and urge a petition to be remembered, hoping to obtain the prayer that Elias offered for Eliseus. "Dear Mother," she said, "I have a special request to make." But Mother Margaret, seeming to guess her meaning, answered quickly, "Ask me nothing," so that she could not proceed.

The detachment she taught to others, she practised herself. Once having assented to a remark made by a Sister, that she hoped one of Mother Margaret's greatest friends might chance to visit Stone, she added the next moment, "Don't think I am wishing for it, though. I don't want a human creature. God alone! If only I could be united to Him!" To his Lordship the Bishop she made the remark, "I have prayed for detachment for a year past, and I think God has given it to me;" and it was observed by many how scrupulously she repelled any of those expressions of sympathy or fond regret, to which suffering nature ordinarily clings.

Yet her tenderness of heart was at the same time constantly manifesting itself. "My poor children!" she would say, "they are suffering for their Mother; it is a cross to you all, but *fiat, fiat!*" She constantly thanked and blessed those who assisted her, and spoke with an overflowing heart of "faithful Sister Rose," her first companion, and now her tender nurse, who, she said,

was her Simon of Cyrene, helping her to bear her cross. Another, she said, had been more than a child to her, and she would speak in praise of this or that Religious in her absence, and say, " They are more than sisters to me." When the Novena of Masses was being offered during Lent for her at the shrine of Our Lady of Assebroeck, another Novena was likewise offered at Stone, and the Community rose earlier every morning in order to recite the Rosary, and hear the Mass of the Novena, before assembling for the Community Mass. It had been proposed that, in addition to these devotions, other penitential exercises should be offered for the same intention, but Mother Margaret would not allow it. " Now mind," she said, addressing the Religious who was at the head of the Community, " you don't put one thing more on the Sisters. There they are, fasting and abstaining, and working hard all day, and breaking their hearts besides. They could not bear it. I know what they feel." The continued prayers offered for her by her own religious children drew from her repeated expressions of gratitude, and one morning during the Novena to Our Lady of Assebroeck, as she heard the distant sound of the Rosary which they were reciting processionally, going round the cloister, she was affected to tears. " God," she said, " must be touched with such affection, and grant them many graces ! " This tenderness of heart was also evinced in other ways. She forgot no one. If a Religious came to see her, she would ask after the children, the orphans, the servants in the house,or whatever else might fall under that Sister's peculiar care. She remembered the absent relatives of each one, and sent kind messages to them, and would show her usual maternal interest in the little affairs or troubles of that large circle outside her convent walls who called her " Mother." When she heard of the innumerable prayers offered for her by priests or other friends, she would reply, " I cannot think how they come to remember me. It must be that

God has looked on the lowness of His handmaid, for He could see nothing viler!'

Very often people sent her messages asking her to pray for them; or recommending themselves to her prayers when she should reach heaven; or referring to her sufferings as signs of God's special favour; or as something which might be offered for the good of the Church. Expressions of this sort deeply wounded her humility. "Don't read me such things as those," she said. "What are the people thinking of? A sinful woman suffering for her sins! It goes through me to hear such things. To think of my doing penance for the Church!" When letters arrived from the General and others at Rome, in reply to the intelligence received of her alarming state, she showed a sort of dread lest they should contain anything to her praise. "Now don't read those things to me," she said, "if they are full of compliments. It does seem so ridiculous to talk of my having done this or that, I can't see it in that light. It is God who has been very good to us: He has made use of me as you might use a broom-stick, and that is all. He wants no one."

For a short time after the beginning of her illness she persevered in reciting the Divine Office, until, through the increase of spinal pain, her arms became unable to support the weight of the book, and she was forced to substitute the Little Office of Our Lady, which she recited as long as she was able to use a book at all. A Religious having one day read her the Prayer of St. Gertrude, giving thanks for sufferings, which begins, "O most loving Jesus," &c.,[1] she said, "You must read this to me every day;" and her request was complied with (though it was difficult to read it without tears) until she became too weak to listen. "Now," she said, "I must say it in desire." The Rosary was constantly in her hands, and the very day before her death she made an effort to say

[1] Prayers of St. Gertrude, p. 174.

it by way of preparation for Holy Communion. She did not like any one to sit and watch her, as it hindered her freedom of prayer and aspiration. About six weeks before her death, being asked what prayers she still felt able to say, she replied that she said the whole Rosary every morning before Mass, and the Litany of Our Lady about twenty times a day. "Then I say the Act of Resignation, beginning 'May the most just, most holy, and most amiable will of God,' I don't know how often. I try to pray all the time I am not speaking, but they are odd sort of prayers; only Our Fathers and Hail Marys, and I fall asleep between." Once she let fall the remark, "Oh, praying is like breathing!" and the Religious to whom she spoke, adds that they knew she was engaged in continual prayer by the movement of her hand which she raised a little and let fall again, as she made her aspirations.

The beginning of February brought a torturing increase of pain. One medical man who watched the progress of the case acknowledged that in all his experience he had never witnessed "so terrible a course of suffering." Yet all remarked that the countenance of the sufferer gave no indication of this; it was wonderful to see its calm expression even in sleep, though her hands would be twitching all the time from the anguish she was enduring. There was no writhing or contortion of the features, only the eyes cast up towards heaven, as she uttered brief aspirations for "patience to the end." "I can see," she one day said, "how God has been preparing my soul for all this for the last two years. I felt something was coming, and I had such a reluctance to suffer! and yet all the books I read were about suffering, and all my prayers were for generosity to suffer. I used to be so weary sometimes, and say to myself, 'How I long for a holiday!' and something always seemed to answer, 'God will give it you in His own way.'"

The Catholic congregation of Stone offered a touching tribute of their respect for Mother Margaret, by begging for a Novena of Masses to be offered on their behalf for her recovery. The Novena began on the 10th of February, a considerable number of the people attending at the early morning Mass. The same act of charity and gratitude was afterwards performed by the Catholics of the congregation of Stoke-upon-Trent, as well as by the children in the Boarding schools attached to these two convents. But it was repeatedly remarked that special prayers of this kind were followed by visible tokens of progress in the malady, and before the termination of the Novena, Mother Margaret's state became so critical, that although no immediate danger was apprehended, it was judged prudent to administer the last Sacraments. She received the rites of the Church,therefore, on the 14th of February,with great peace and tranquillity, and perfect possession of mind ; humbly begging pardon of all the Religious who were assembled round her bed, for any pain or scandal she might ever have given them, and answering the usual questions proposed by the priest in a tone of intense fervour. When this affecting ceremony was concluded, she seemed to have turned her thoughts entirely to the next world, and endeavoured to console her weeping children. The administration of the Sacraments was, however, followed by a slight temporary improvement which raised their hopes ; and the confessor, on visiting the patient the following morning, let fall some remarks which seemed to hint at the possibility of recovery. " O Father," replied Mother Margaret, in a tone of reproach, " I thought you were going to send me to heaven, and now you are trying to bring me back. I have done my work, let me go to God ; of course I should be glad to do a little more work for Him if that were His blessed will ; but shall I have all this weary road to travel over again before I go to God Almighty ? " The improvement, however, was of no long

duration. The pain increased to an agonising degree, so as to render it impossible any longer to remove her from the bed to the sofa, a relief which she had hitherto been able to procure for some hours in every day. The arrival of an invalid bed, with every contrivance for giving rest and change of position, was hailed with gratitude by the Community, who were indebted for this, and other precious gifts, to the Duchess of Argyle, a noble benefactress whose affectionate sympathy throughout the whole of this distressing time was truly that of a sister. But in spite of the great assistance thus afforded to those whose painful duty it was to move the sufferer, her agonies daily increased, often lasting day and night without a moment's cessation. She became unable to lie in any position except on the back, and repeated again and again that she was lying on a bed of fire. It was at this time that a letter was received from Rome, conveying to Mother Margaret the blessing of the Holy Father, which had been obtained for her by Monsignor Talbot, immediately on his hearing of her illness. Other letters, also, from the Master-General of the Order, brought the consoling promise of Masses to be offered up in her behalf at the tomb of St. Catherine, together with words of sympathy and encouragement to her afflicted children, which we will quote in this place. "I received the sad news contained in your letter[1] of the 14th," he writes, "whilst in retreat at Marino. I call them *sad*, not for your excellent Mother, who, after having so generously laboured, and suffered for the glory of God, for the Church, and for the salvation of souls, is happy in witnessing the end of her sacrifices and the day of recompense so fast approaching; but sad for you, for our Order, and for England, to whom her death will be so great a loss. And yet she will not leave you orphans; and you may with confidence repeat to her the words which for

[1] The letter, that is, announcing her having on that day received the last Sacraments.

six centuries we have addressed to our holy Father St. Dominic, '*Dum post mortem promisisti, te profuturam fratribus. Imple mater, quod dixisti, nos tuis juvans precibus.*' If this letter find her still alive, tell her that I send her, with all my heart, my paternal benediction, and beg her prayers when she shall be in the presence of God." Devotions were begun towards the close of this month in union with a Novena which was being made at Tours in honour of the Holy Face ; and on the 3rd of March, the Religious watched by turns, all night, before a picture of the Holy Face which was exposed in the choir. Mother Margaret expressed the warmest gratitude for this, and every other mark of her children's devotion ; and in the midst of her own protracted sufferings, she often thought and spoke of one of the young Fathers of the province, who was suffering from a malady that was of the same nature as her own, saying," My heart aches for him ; I fear he cannot have all the helps I have. I so often pray for him, and I hope he prays for me." It was apparent from many circumstances that by this time she had altogether withdrawn her mind from temporal affairs. She appeared to consider the government of the Congregation as a thing in which she was no longer concerned, and if consulted on any matter, would show an unwillingness to give an opinion which might bind those who had to act. To Mother Imelda who had assisted her for so many years in all the cares of superiority, she from time to time gave a few simple words of counsel, which all spoke the one lesson of *God alone*. " Lean on *God alone*—God and yourself ; that is what I have always found. No one else can help you. Never decide on things in a hurry. One should pray and say the hymns of the Holy Ghost, and then God tells you what to do." Once, having referred to the many years they had worked together, Mother Imelda replied, " And now, you leave me to work alone." " Don't say that," replied Mother Margaret ; " see how many you have to

help you, compared to the little help I had when we began. God will help you if you are faithful; and as to temporals, I don't like to hear you make an 'if' or a 'but' about them. It is sure to be right. How could you doubt it when God has done so much out of nothing? We must be thankful He has allowed me to carry on the work so long. I used often to think what I should have done if you had been taken first, but now there are many young ones to assist you." Seeing a look of distress on the countenance of her to whom she spoke, she added, "Now, don't do so, it does not make me happier;" and more than once she made her leave the room when her own sufferings were more than usually acute, saying, "You must not be upset, you have the Community to think of, and must not stay here to be distressed."

In recalling the incidents of that time of sorrow and lingering suspense, it would be worse than ungrateful if those who took part in them should fail to acknowledge the many tokens which were granted them of God's sustaining grace. We all know the unhinging influence which domestic sorrow ordinarily possesses—its power to seize and absorb the heart, and incapacitate us from fulfilling the common round of daily duties. Nor does the discipline of religious life in any degree dull those natural sensibilities which at such times assert their claims. But one thing it undoubtedly does—it robs them of their selfishness, and urges the aching heart to resist those emotions of self-pity and self-concentration which lie at the root of so much mere natural sorrow. In a religious house, moreover, the claims of duty can never be disallowed. That path of which a poet has told us that "he who walks it *learns to deaden love of self*,"[1] is the daily

[1] "The path of Duty is the way to glory:
He, who walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and *learns to deaden*
Love of self, before his journey closes

path of a Religious, into whose life the necessary suppression of egotism, in obedience to duty, which is at once both " victory and law," is ever weaving a certain character of the sublime. It is a victory, which, if it cost something to nature, yet brings its rich reward, sustaining the soul, and enabling it to endure, when unsupported nature would often lie down under its burden. Remembering, therefore, this time of bitter trial, we cannot choose but cherish also the memory of those precious lessons which it taught ; we would remind ourselves how the sorrowful days went by, and work and prayer went on as usual ; how, if the cross pressed heavily, the grace was given to all to bear it ; and how those who seemed, as they said, " to be living all day long with Our Lady of Sorrows," were enabled, not only to feel the sword that pierced her heart, but with her to *stand*, without fainting.

To Mother Margaret herself the progress of her sufferings was attended by an increasing power to endure them. This was noticed by all her attendants, and is manifest in the notes of her words taken down at the time. There is discernible in them, month after month, a more entire detachment from all human interests, a profounder resignation, and increasing indifference to all things but the will of God. At the beginning of her illness, the shrinking of nature from its terrible cross was often apparent, but as the suffering intensified, the spirit was more and more fortified to endure.

Up to the last month of her life, when the long-continued pain produced weakness and occasional wandering of the head, her mind remained as firm and energetic as ever, but after answering a few questions about letters, or other affairs, she would say, " I am dead to all these things now ; I have nothing more to do with them. Of course, I pray

He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, that out-redden
All voluptuous garden roses."—TENNYSON.

for it all, and desire its welfare, but that is all. I am now only a hindrance." " But you do not pray for death ? " asked one of her companions. " No," she replied, " I pray for nothing but that the will of God may be done. I have united my intention to all your prayers for me, but have always added, ' Thy will, O Lord, nothing else.' Sometimes I do say, ' A little ease, dear Lord, if it be Thy will ; ' but I really have no wish about it, whether it be to go to God, or to suffer, or to remain here and work. I really and truly only wish what God wills." After a pause, she added, " Now, don't think, because I said that, that I think I am a good woman. No, I have much to expiate ; all this is a special judgment on me for my sins."

She was now entirely confined to one position, and could only relieve the pressure on the back by supporting herself by her arms. This she did by means of loops at either side of the bed. During the severe paroxysms of pain her hands were extended to grasp and hold by these loops, and by degrees this became her ordinary position, so that one beheld her day and night, lying thus on her back, with her arms extended in the form of a cross. Sometimes, when she was wearied out and stiffened with cold, she would try and bring her arms down ; but she was soon obliged to raise them as before, and thus, as one of her attendants writes, she seemed day and night like a living image of the crucifix. Her face began to show signs of emaciation, but there was not a line of suffering. It constantly wore the same expression of tranquillity, except when moved to tears by the sight of the crucifix, or in what she called " a frenzy of pain." An ardent desire to go to God seemed to fill her soul, and even to the medical men who attended her she would address the plaintive words, " Do let me go to God ! " If the crucifix was presented to her, she would kiss it with abundance of tears, saying, " My sweet Jesus, my Beloved, come and take me : I desire only to be united to Thee ! " A picture

of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour was sent, about this time, by the Redemptorist Fathers of Clapham, and being taken to her, drew from her some ardent expressions of her love for the Blessed Virgin. "I *have* loved her dearly," she repeated. "And have fought her battles too, have you not?" remarked one of the Religious. "I have, indeed," she replied, "and I fear I have sometimes committed sin by it." And on other occasions she also accused herself of the many times she had been excited to anger in defence of the Blessed Virgin. She often spoke of Bow, the foundation on which she had spent her last remains of strength, and which lay so close to her heart. "I always think of Bow with joy," she said, "and never regret having gone there, though I do believe I am suffering for that place;" alluding to the saying in the Community, that there was always a victim for each new foundation. And in the midst of her severest agonies she made known her request that the convent should be dedicated to St. Catherine, and opened on St. Catherine's Feast, naming all the arrangements which she wished to be observed on the occasion.

Lætare Sunday,[1] which fell this year on the 22nd of March, brought with it one last gleam of hope. A faint chance seemed to open that the malady might assume a more favourable character; but the symptoms which gave rise to these hopes soon disappeared, and during the remainder of Lent and Passion-tide the terrible pain went on increasing. She described herself as lying in "a pool of fire," or as if her back was being pulled to pieces on hot burning plates. Everything she swallowed seemed in like manner to turn to fire. Having asked some of the Religious who visited her to pray that she might soon go to God, she

[1] On *Lætare*, or Mid-Lent Sunday—also called *Mothering Sunday*—the sorrowful character of the Lenten Office is somewhat suspended; the organ is allowed to be played during Mass, and in most religious houses the Sunday is kept as a kind of holiday.

added, in reply to their words of distress, " Why, would you have me live upon a gridiron ? " But after giving utterance to words like these, she always added," Never mind, don't let us moan and groan about it ; it is the will of God, it is all right," or other expressions of resignation.

There was a sad monotony through all this time which made the long months seem still longer and more desolate to those whose office it was to watch by sufferings which they were powerless to relieve ; and yet more so, perhaps, to the bulk of the Community who were unable to assist in the sick-room, and who felt that their real separation from their Mother had already taken place even in this world. Day after day the morning bulletin told the same sad tale with little or no variation,—a night of agony and no prospect of relief. The time seemed reckoned by the devotions and Novenas and Rosaries which succeeded one another without intermission, procuring for the sufferer, as cannot be doubted, many a precious grace which supported her in her fiery trial, but bringing no relief of pain or hope of recovery. During Holy Week it seemed as if our Lord had been pleased in a special manner to unite her sufferings with His own, for her pains were more than usually intense. Yet, on Holy Thursday she was able to see and express her approval of some decorations prepared for the sepulchre, and as one of the Religious was leaving her room, in order to take her hour of adoration, Mother Margaret looked at her rather wistfully, bidding her " say everything to our Lord for me ; but," she added, " He is here as well as there, that is my comfort." During the night she spoke several times of our Lord's agony and betrayal, and of all He had suffered for us. She had always had a great devotion to the observance of the Holy Hour on Thursday nights, which she relinquished only under obedience. The paroxysms of pain were at this time so acute that she feared, as she said, if the Sisters were not by, that she should throw herself out

of bed in a kind of frenzy, forgetting, for the moment, her absolute powerlessness to move. No doubt, this lover of the Passion of our Lord was able to offer all things in union with His bitter sufferings; and how close she kept in spirit to the Cross of Christ was manifested by the words she was heard murmuring to herself when Holy Saturday came at last, "*How glad I am He cannot suffer any more!*"

On Easter Monday she would seem to have thought her end approaching, and seeing beside her the Religious who had for years been her chief companion and assistant, she attempted to console her, saying, "Pray for a happy death for me; if God is satisfied, why should not you be? I have felt it a great favour of God that you were not taken before me: I was getting old, and could not have done without you." Then she added, "My prayer has always been that I may retain consciousness to the last; but if I should lose it, *you* know that I have always believed in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that I die in the faith of the Holy Catholic Church." To her confessor she expressed her thanks for all he had done for her soul, promising to pray both for him and for the Order. "I have always loved the Order," she said; "it has been almost an *irregular* affection with me. Not that I cared so much for any individual in it, but it is an Order of Saints, and I desired to see it flourish. I wish I could have done more for it. I would if I could." Then she begged the confessor to express to the Father-Provincial her regret if she had ever said or done anything to give pain to him or to any of the Fathers; adding, "If I have, it has been the head, not the heart, and a warmth of temper I could not always control." And then she spoke of herself, and the work which God had suffered her to do. "I know some people think I have done much for God, but I could never see it so. Oh, it is God who has done much for me. To

me it was all gratification! I have had only to ask and have. It is wonderful what God has ever done for me in all the works I have undertaken for Him. It was too much. I always felt there must be some great suffering to fill up the measure on the other side."

Another day she spoke of the strong ties of friendship and gratitude which had bound her so many years to Bishop Ullathorne. "Our friendship," she said, "has always been in God and for God." Gratitude to her benefactors was one of the sentiments which had ever been strongest in her during life, and it did not fail to find expression in her last hours. "The Bishop and Dr. Northcote," she said, "have both helped this foundation in different ways—let it therefore be written down as from *me*, that this house must always be considered as their own home."

In the course of her illness she once let fall the remark, that there was a mystery in suffering of which the world knew nothing. And she herself was drawing abundantly from its mysterious treasure-house. For, to quote the language of one who watched beside her, "The soul seemed gaining strength as the body weakened." "Her prayers are incessant," continues the same writer; "though she still expresses fear lest her patience should fail, yet she appears more cheerful in herself than at the beginning of her illness, when her interior sufferings were so great. She even seems able now to look forward to her sufferings being prolonged with less dread than before, though they are growing each day far more intense, and the bodily weakness is greater." One day she was heard murmuring to herself, "I cannot think why people make such a fuss about dying—we must all die sooner or later; how could we see God if we did not?" In all this there was unmistakable evidence of that powerful interior support which God was affording to the soul even while the body was yielding its extremest tribute of suffering,—a support

given in answer to those abundant prayers which He moved so many hearts to offer, and which obtained strength and resignation not only for the sufferer herself, but for those who had to bear their own cross of compassion and bereavement. Her attendants bear witness to the unalterable patience which she exhibited, both in herself, and towards others ; to the increasing gentleness and childlike simplicity of her demeanour, practising a child's obedience, and asking leave of those around her to do this or that. " Whenever I sat up with her," says one, " I was struck at seeing that, through all that intense and burning agony, she never made one movement of impatience, and constantly wore the same beautiful and religious aspect. She was always making aspirations, or saying her Rosary, asking for what she wanted like a child, and so anxious that none of us should be overfatigued, and that we should have everything we could require." Her confessor tried to engage her to offer her own prayers that God would restore her to health, but this was a hard exercise of obedience. " O Father," she said, " how can you ask me such a thing ? To be so near Almighty God and then have to go back ! " Her mind now occasionally wandered from weakness, but from time to time she was able to give her attention to the questions referred to her by the Religious. On the 23rd of April she spoke much of the arrangements she wished to be made regarding her burial, and being told that the Bishop had already regulated that she should be laid in the choir, " Oh," she exclaimed, " impossible ; you would all be frightened ! " Then after a minute she added, " Well, I like it, and I don't like it." She concluded by begging that she might be laid in the centre of the new cemetery, with the cross at her head, and her feet towards the convent. " Of course I am nothing now," she said, " but if I have a wish, it is this, and let it be written down in my name ; " and she added more than once, that " she was not

worthy to be buried in the church." His Lordship, to whom the matter was referred for decision, overruled the scruples suggested by her humility, and decided that her children should have the consolation afforded by the hope that their Mother's venerated remains would repose among them in the choir.

This conversation took place on the day when a solemn Novena to St. Catherine was begun in preparation for her feast. The effort of speaking so much caused Mother Margaret some exhaustion, and so marked a change manifested itself in her appearance that the priest was called, and gave her the last blessing. At this very moment the Community were beginning their procession round the cloister, bearing the relics of St. Catherine, and singing the hymns of her Office. The distant sound mingled with the voice of the priest as he pronounced the prayers and blessing, and deeply moved those who were present, and who almost dreaded lest the Novena now commencing should be the immediate preparation for the end. The remainder of that evening was spent by all in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and the following morning, the 23rd of April, Mother Margaret appeared in such imminent danger that all the Religious were summoned to her room, where the Litany of the Saints was recited by the confessor. By the time he had concluded, Mother Margaret had rallied considerably, and the curtains at the foot of her bed being withdrawn, so that she could see all her children, she exerted herself to address them a few parting words. "May God bless you all, my dear children," she said; "I beg pardon for all I have ever done to offend you. Ask of God the forgiveness of my sins. Sin is an awful thing when you come to your last hour. Pray for me. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God bless you all, my dear children. Keep close to Almighty God and to your Rule, and whatever you do, do all for God alone." Then, sinking back exhausted, she

added, " I cannot say more, but what I say I mean." The Religious retired to the choir, and during the remainder of the day Mother Margaret remained in a weak and suffering state, with her mind often rambling. She once asked that the Litany of Our Lady might be recited, and at its close made signs for the Sisters in attendance to come near, and gave each what she used to call her Belgian blessing, making the sign of the Cross on their foreheads, and laying her hands on their heads. The next day she continued in the same state of partial wandering, yet through it all her aspirations were most moving and devout. Once she was heard murmuring, " All bounty, all mercy, all love ! " Another time she seemed offering a long prayer for the pardon of sin, and the Religious by her side caught the words, " O my Father, pardon, pardon my many great sins ! " And again, " How good God is ! Who is like to God ? " Once she missed her crucifix, and putting out her hand to feel for it, was heard saying, " O my crucified Love, where are you ? " and when it was put into her hand, " That is right," she said, " I want nothing else." Her thoughts seemed often occupied with Bow. " May God bless and prosper it," she said ; and sometimes she appeared to be giving directions relative to the removal of the Sisters into their own house at Bow, and the opening of the convent, which had been fixed to take place on the Feast of St. Catherine.

On the eve of that feast, Bishop Ullathorne arrived at the convent, and the Community being assembled in the chapter-room, his Lordship addressed them a few words of consolation and encouragement under the heavy trial which was impending. After reading to them a passage from the dying exhortation address to her spiritual children by St. Catherine of Siena,[1] he reminded them of

[1] *Life of Catherine of Siena*, Part III., chap. xxii. The whole of this chapter had a touching significance to the listeners on that occasion, who could not but recognize a parallel to their own case even in the

the words of the Paschal season which they were then celebrating, " If you loved Me you would rejoice, because I go to the Father ; " and called on them to raise their hearts above the natural sorrow of such a separation, and to rejoice that God was crowning so noble a life with a noble end. And he concluded by promising them that their present sorrow should be turned into joy, not only for her but for themselves also, because, when the root and stem was transferred to heaven, it would bear the branches with it, and the hearts that on earth had been so closely knit to her own would be drawn thither in virtue of a yet more powerful attraction. Mother Margaret herself had sometimes striven to comfort her children with the assurance that her sufferings would procure many graces for them all. " If I persevere," she once said,—" but I won't say *if*—you will bless God for all this in the end."

The weakness of her faculties was now increasing, and of this she herself appeared conscious, saying to Mother Imelda Poole, whom she regarded as her second self, " Whilst I have my senses you must be my constant counsellor." She seemed to look on this Sister now in the light of her Superior, and liked to be told by her whether she were to take this or that remedy. She often asked those about her to help her to prepare for Confession or Communion, and to assist her in examining her conscience. " Be sure to tell me," she would say, " if you see the least thing in me that would detain me from the presence of God." It was observed that through her illness, and up to the day of her death, her voice lost nothing of its

description of St. Catherine's physical sufferings. " For it seemed," says the old writer, " as if Almighty God had given power to Satan to torment and vex her body in such sort, that from the sole of her foot to the top of her head there was no one part without its peculiar pain. . . . Those who stood about her were marvellously astonished to see her patience and cheerfulness in all her pains, which they saw by evident tokens were so great and vehement, that they thought it impossible for her, or for any creature, to bear them as she did, without showing so much as any little sign of sorrow or lamentation, but that she was stayed by some very great and special grace of God."

ordinary sweetness ; on the contrary, the slight difficulty in speaking caused by increasing weakness added a certain childlike grace to her articulation, while the tone of her voice became most exquisitely musical ; a circumstance which those who are used to attend on the dying know to be far from common. It was equally remarkable in the case of Sister Mary Philomena. " I was so riveted by the charm," says one, " that I could not withdraw myself from listening to either of them." " In the midst of her wanderings," writes another, " she was inexpressibly sweet, it seemed only an increase of that childlike simplicity which had always distinguished her. Yet it was at the same time unspeakably sad to see that strong mind brought low." Indeed, this last stage of her illness was by far the most painful to those around her. It was almost more than they could endure, to witness the failure of those colossal powers on which they had leant so long and so confidingly, and to hear her turn from one to another, and ask them " not to forsake her." Two of the Religious had to leave her in this state, and proceed to St. Mary Church, taking their last look of her beloved face, and kissing her hand, for the last time, as she lay asleep. The feast of St. Catherine was past, and Our Lady's Month of May had begun, and still the long agony went on without change or intermission. It seemed as if her magnificent organisation was holding out to its last fibre. Every part of the body had to endure its own peculiar torture. The very tongue was hard and dry, and furrowed with deep cracks from the intensity of the internal fever. On Saturday the 2nd of May, she received Holy Communion, and, afterwards, when the Crucifix was presented to her, she made an effort to kiss the Five Wounds, and then sank back exhausted, whispering, " I can do no more." It was always beautiful to see her communicate. She would insist on having her right hand freed from the bed-clothes that she might make the sign of the Cross, and strike her

breast at the *Domine non sum dignus*; and then with hands and eyes upraised she made her devout ejaculations, the most frequent being the words, "My God and my All!" Afterwards she liked to have the curtains of the bed closely drawn, that she might make her thanksgiving undisturbed. During the days that followed, her intervals of entire consciousness were few, yet, from time to time, amid pain and wandering, the words were ever on her lips, "The Will of God, the Will of God!" Her sufferings were intense, the very feet twitching and convulsed with the tension of the nerves. On the 6th of May the physician in attendance having visited her, she herself asked him how long he thought it would last. He told her she was much weaker since his last visit, sixteen days before, and that he did not think it possible she could survive another sixteen days. "Thank God!" was her reply, and then she begged to be left quiet, saying, "Sixteen days is a short time, I wish to be alone with God." The impression on the minds of those in attendance on her was, that, however wandering she was in *speech*, her *mind* was generally recollected in God; but to them she was already gone, for her power of communicating with others was every day growing more imperfect. "We have only her poor suffering body with us," writes one, "and that in a state which makes our hearts bleed to think of." On the 9th of May, she was seized with a paroxysm of pain exceeding anything she had yet endured. "God only knows what it is," she said. "My back is on fire. God's holy will be done. I have not murmured, have I?" Hitherto, she had always said, "My back will break;" but now she used the words, "My back is *broken!*" marking some great crisis of the disorder. Her exclamations of suffering, however, were all mingled with prayers and acts of resignation. At intervals during the day, she spoke affectionately to all around her, expressing the comfort she felt in having them near her. She uttered

the Holy Name repeatedly; "God of God, Light of Light," she exclaimed, "oh, if it would please Him to take me! How happy I was this morning when I thought I was going!" Occasionally she whispered, "I am so frightened!" and at one sharp pang, "O my dear child, pray that my faith may not fail!" but it was noticed that this was the only occasion when she seemed to fear the possibility of the last-named temptation. Her attendants were very desirous of making some alteration in the arrangement of the bed, and as they were consulting how this should be done, considering the possibility of moving the sufferer, Mother Margaret overheard them, and said in an emphatic manner, "Now you let it alone; you can't mend it; leave it all to God, He will mend it—*wait till Sunday!* Then after a minute or two she repeated, "Leave it to God! *He will put it right on Monday!*" They thought her wandering at the time, but the event seemed to show that she had a foresight of the time of her death.

Sunday, the 10th of May, the feast of St. Antoninus of Florence, came at last. It was also the Fourth Sunday after Easter, and the words of the Gospel spoke to the hearts of those who heard them with no ordinary power. "I go to Him who sent me; and because I have spoken these things sorrow hath filled your hearts. But I tell you the truth; *it is expedient for you that I go.*" Indeed, throughout the whole of that Paschal season it seemed as if the language of the Office and the Missal were being addressed personally to themselves, preparing them for coming bereavement, mingling words of comfort and promise with those of sorrow, giving thanks for a work completed now to God's glory, and praying for those who were left behind, and who had been gathered together in His name, "out of the world." This last day of Mother Margaret's life was one of protracted agony. It was touching to see how she clung to the protection of those about her: before trusting herself to fall asleep, she

would say to her devoted attendants, "You will sit by me still, won't you, and take care of me?" Once waking in a fright, the Religious who was watching beside the bed, laid her hand on hers to soothe her, saying, "It's all right, dear Mother!" Recognizing in the speaker Mother Imelda, her whom she now regarded as the Superior of the Congregation, Mother Margaret drew her Sister's hand to her lips, and whispered "It is you, is it? Then it *is* all right!" Three of the Religious remained in her room during the night. She breathed with difficulty, but was comparatively quiet till about midnight, when, hearing by the sound that the oppression of the chest was increased, Mother Assistant came to the side of her bed, and observed that her eyes were very prominent, as though struggling for breath. Some remedies were applied without effect; she was, however, perfectly conscious and recollected, and asked if they had not better send for the medical man. But the next moment, sensible herself of the approach of the last change, she exclaimed, "The priest, the priest!" and they saw that the end was come at last. The chaplain was accordingly summoned, and the Community were roused by the fatal death-signal,[1] the dismal sound of which, in the silence of the night, struck to their very hearts. In a few minutes all were assembled in the sick-chamber. On either side of the bed knelt the Superiors of the Community and the elder Religious, one of whom supported the blessed candle in her Mother's dying fingers, a large Crucifix being held before her at the foot of the bed. The priest knelt at her right hand, and began the commendatory prayers in English; the Religious answering aloud, their voices interrupted by their tears, and their looks fixed on the countenance of their dying Mother. She appeared to

[1] Notice of any Sister being in her agony is given by a particular clapper only used at such times, and during those days in Holy Week when the bells are silent.

retain consciousness to the last moment. The last words she was heard to utter were, " Lord, into Thy Hands I commend my spirit " ; followed by a whispered ejaculation of the Holy Name. There was scarcely a struggle, only a few sobs and heavings and a gradual gentle failure of the breath, which lasted hardly five minutes, and then she drew her hand up to her cheek, like a child asleep. There were a few deep-drawn breaths, and all was over. Her eyes had closed of themselves, gently and naturally ; and the last passage was so tranquil, that the precise moment of departure could only be discerned by that stillness of the features which betokened that the spirit had at the last been set free from its suffering prison. Her words had been verified, for she expired between Sunday and Monday, about a quarter after midnight on the 11th of May, 1868.

It was over at last, that long and terrible purgation ; and in the midst of their sorrow, the first emotion of her orphaned children was almost one of relief. Considering the immense vital strength which she still appeared to possess, they had dreaded the probability of a long and terrible agony, and the extreme tranquility of these last moments was therefore an unlooked-for consolation. Moreover, the bitterness of parting had been gone through long before, and during the six sad months which had intervened since Mother Margaret's separation from the Community, their hearts had been wrung by an anguish which, as many said, taught them a new sympathy with the Dolours of Our Lady. The Cross had come to each and all ; those who, for years, had been most closely linked with the life of their venerated Mother, and who had watched and tended her in her dying agonies, had shared these agonies in their own hearts ; whilst others suffered with them, and in them, in virtue of that strong cord of loving sympathy which binds in one, with a strength surpassing many a natural tie, the hearts which God has consecrated for Himself alone.

The Cross had come to all ; and the tender providence of that good Father had given a sanctifying power to its gracious touch ; they could bear to be unselfish now ; to merge the thought of their own orphanhood in that of her blessedness : for how could they doubt that it was well with her, and that she, who had been called by her Lord to drink so deep of the chalice of His sufferings, was soon to satisfy her quenchless thirst at the fountain-head of Life Eternal !

Such a hope, beside the death-bed of one who had lived, laboured, and suffered for *God alone*, was surely not presumptuous ; and to some it was strengthened and confirmed, not by any miraculous tokens, but by certain interior touches from the finger of God, which made the moment of bereavement to them a moment of special grace. " Our Mother *spoke to me without words*, when dying," said one ;—" she struck a blow to my heart with her dying hand," wrote another, " that has changed me for life." Nor was it only among Mother Margaret's own children that such a grace was felt and acknowledged. One, in no way belonging to the Community, has owned, to the glory of God, that her holy death was the immediate instrument of recalling him to his religious duties. On entering the room where she had died, though he was at that time unaware of the fact, he was touched by a feeling of compunction he could not resist, and his happy correspondence with this grace became the means of firmly establishing him in the service of God. In one and all the rock was smitten, and the waters flowed.

Early in the morning, before Prime, the body was conveyed to the Chapter-room, and the doors of the Chapter-room and the Choir being thrown open, Mass was celebrated for the repose of the departed. The Religious watched by the body by turns, reciting the Psalter aloud, according to the custom of the Order. Towards noon his Lordship the Bishop arrived, and arranged that the funeral should

not take place until Thursday, and that on Tuesday evening the body should be removed from the Chapter-room to the nave of the church, that the people might have an opportunity of beholding, for the last time, the remains of one who had so many claims on their affection and respect. During Monday and Tuesday the body continued in the Chapter-room; every member remained flexible, and the countenance lost all appearance of suffering or emaciation, and assumed a beauty which rather increased than diminished as the hours went by. The expression was that of extraordinary majesty and strength, but mingled with childlike sweetness and serenity. The eyes having closed of themselves had never required to be closed again, and this gave a peculiarly natural and life-like expression to the face. It was impossible to resist coming again and again to contemplate the grand beauty of that head, so colossal in its proportions, so royal in its expression, and yet with a smile of almost infantine happiness hovering about the closed mouth.

On Tuesday evening the body was carried processionally to the church, and deposited on a bier in the central aisle which was arranged as a temporary choir. On either side and at the foot of the bier hung funeral banners bearing the following inscriptions: "She was a mother to the poor, eyes to the blind, a foot to the lame." "If you loved me you would indeed rejoice." "Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." A considerable number of the Catholic congregation were assembled to assist at the ceremony; and the Religious having taken their places in the seats prepared for them, recited aloud the Penitential Psalms, and chanted the *De profundis*. That night some of the patients from St. Mary's Hospital assisted the Religious in watching beside the body, and throughout Wednesday the church was visited by hundreds of all ranks, who came to touch the body with their rosaries, medals, and pious pictures.

Pictures also had to be supplied to a great number for the same purpose, and two of the Religious were kept constantly employed, touching the body with these pious objects, and distributing them to the people. The flowers with which the bier and the body were decorated were also carried away, and often renewed ; and it was observed as somewhat unusual that bees found their way into the church, and were busy among these flowers as in a garden bed. All the hospital patients entreated to be allowed to visit the church and take a last farewell of their good mother, and even those who were too infirm to walk were carried thither on chairs. The Divine Office was recited by the Religious in the temporary choir which had been formed in the nave, and at seven in the evening the Dirge for the Dead was said, the Lauds being sung. On this occasion, the church was crowded, most of those present wearing mourning in token of their respect, and at the conclusion of the service the body was visited as before by great numbers.

A difficulty had in the meanwhile arisen with regard to the funeral oration, which Archbishop Manning had been requested to deliver. Late on Wednesday evening, however, intelligence was received that he found it impossible to attend, and in this perplexity Bishop Ullathorne agreed himself to undertake a task the difficulty of which was in his case increased by his intimate friendship with the deceased, as well as by the shortness of the notice. The Requiem Mass commenced at ten o'clock ; from an early hour up to that time the church continued to be visited by hundreds who came to gaze at the body, and touch it with their pictures and rosaries. The features remained unchanged in their singular beauty, and the fingers of the hands were still perfectly flexible. It was impossible to behold it without emotion. A man of the working class went out saying to a neighbour, " That must have been a good woman ; I went into the church a Pro-

testant and I leave it a Catholic!" One of the persons who was present, and testified his respect, was a Protestant clergyman; many came on foot from a considerable distance; one woman with a crippled hand with simple faith requested to be allowed to touch the body with the suffering member; it was a scene such as is commonly enough witnessed in Catholic countries, but which in the midst of an English population could only have been called forth by very deep and unusual sentiments of respect.

It had been intended that the body should be removed to the choir before the commencement of the Mass, but in order not to disappoint the people this arrangement was given up, and it was determined that the whole ceremony should proceed in the church, where all might satisfy their devotion. The last sad ceremony of closing the coffin took place immediately before the commencement of the Mass. All the Religious who assisted at it pressed a farewell kiss on the beloved features of their Mother, which they were to behold no more in this world, and fell on their knees as the lid was closed, and the coffin covered with a white funeral pall. At ten the procession entered the church by the cloister door. It included the Chapter of Birmingham, who all attended in their canons' dress;[1] the priests of the Conference; nine Dominicans, three Benedictines, and one Oratorian Father; in all about forty priests, with his Lordship Bishop Ullathorne; the Right Rev. Dr. Amherst, Bishop of Northampton, arriving before the conclusion of the ceremony. The Mass was sung *coram pontifice*, the Dominican Fathers alone forming the choir, and singing the beautiful plain chant Requiem with singular feeling and expression. The

[1] Only once before had the Cathedral Chapter attended in a body in this church, : as before related, it was on occasion of the Triduo to St. Catherine, the solemnities of which were recalled by many circumstances of the funeral obsequies.

Religious occupied the temporary choir immediately surrounding the body, the remainder of the church being filled with a densely-crowded congregation. The Bishop in his oration gave a sketch of Mother Margaret's life, dwelling both on her labours of charity and on her more interior and spiritual gifts. At the conclusion of the sermon, which lasted an hour and a half, the ceremony of deposition began. The priest, deacon, and subdeacon, attended by the Fathers who formed the choir, having descended from the sanctuary, the procession was formed, eight of the Religious bearing the body to the choir, preceded by the rest of the Community. The procession passed up the chancel steps, through the sanctuary, the grave containing the leaden coffin having been prepared just within the choir gates, and immediately below the spot where the Religious receive Holy Communion. The accustomed psalms and anthems of the Dominican Office were chanted around the grave whilst the wooden coffin was lowered, and the beloved remains were laid in their place of repose. Thus, like her great patriarch, St. Dominic, Mother Margaret lies "beneath the feet of her children." A wooden tablet inlaid with her monogram, surrounded by a crown of thorns, marks the spot on the choir floor beneath which that great heart has been laid to rest; and it is no little consolation for her children, when they assemble before the altar, or for the daily office, to feel that their mother is in the midst of them still. May her spirit no less abide among them to the end! may a double portion of that spirit rest on those who are called to fill her place and carry on her work, and may one and all of the Dominican Sisters in England be animated to follow in her footsteps, and to teach the lesson expressed in her entire life, "GOD ALONE, GOD ALONE, GOD ALONE!"

ADDENDA

At the invitation of Rev. Father Lyle, and with the approbation of the Archbishop of Edinburgh, a foundation was made at Hawick, Scotland, in 1909. The animosity excited by the advent of Catholic nuns in the town caused, at first, many annoyances to the little Community; but by quiet courage and perseverance the Sisters, in a short time, gained respect and friendliness.

In 1919, invited by the Bishop of Brentwood, a small band of Sisters commenced a foundation at Kelvedon, Essex, replacing Sisters of Mercy in a Convent and Convalescent and Holiday Home. A blessing has visibly rested on the work of the community, both in the Home and in the apostolic visiting of Catholics scattered in the surrounding districts. The appreciation of the benefits to soul and body, derived by Londoners and others who spend week-ends or longer periods at the Home, is testified by the constant repetition of their visits.

Printed at the Burleigh Press, *Lewin's Mead,* Bristol.